Contents

Acknowledgments 2
Part I: Executive summary and proposals for further consideration 3
Part II: Project overview 8
Part III: Multiculturalism and diversity in Victoria and Australia 10
Part IV: Key findings 20
Part V: Conclusion 37
Appendix 1: Methodology and sample 43
Appendix 2: Schedule of questions 46
Appendix 3: Multiculturalism and Victoria: A brief overview 47
Appendix 4: National security statement 51

List of Tables and Figures
Table 1 Australian religious diversity – 2006 Census 16
Table 2 Victorian religious diversity – 2006 Census 16
Table 3 Melbourne’s religious diversity – 2006 Census 17
Table 4 Australians according to place of birth 17
Table 5 Victorians according to place of birth 17
Table 6 Melbournians according to place of birth 18
Table A1 – Distribution of focus groups by location and demographics 43
Table A2 – Focus group participants according to sex and location 43
Table A3 – Participants according to occupation 44
Table A4 – Participants according to age 45
Table A5 – Participants according to ethnic heritage and places of birth 45
Figure 1 Place of birth by area: Australia, overseas and not stated (inc. no response) 18
Figure 2 Place of birth: Rest of world 18

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Disclaimer:

The authors advise that some of the material contained in this report may be considered offensive. We wish to draw attention to the fact that such statements in no way reflect the authors’ opinions, those of the Global Terrorism Research Centre; School of Political Inquiry; Monash University; GPS Research or the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The authors have summarized and recounted the contributors’ opinions, and have used them as a basis from which to make the evaluations discussed throughout the report and its conclusions.
Part I: Executive summary and proposals for further consideration

Multiculturalism is a core, yet not universally accepted component of Australian and Victorian identity and policy. Throughout the years of the Howard Government, some commentators challenged the value of multiculturalism to Australia, and argued that rather than providing a mechanism for inclusion within Australian society, it generated divisiveness and led to a culture of special privileges amongst minority groups. Since the 9/11 attacks (11 September 2001), but particularly after the 7/7 London bombings (7 July 2005), some commentators in Australia and elsewhere have argued that not only is multiculturalism generating cultural ghettoes which threaten to fragment social harmony, but that it also creates an environment which is complicit in producing extremism, and extremists who are willing to engage in acts of terrorist violence. These same commentators argue that by demonstrating deference to cultural sensitivities, police are unable to conduct their basic duties of law enforcement and protecting communities (Bone 2005: 13; Albrechtsen 2005: 15; Doepfner 2005: 9; The Australian 2005: 14; Stone 2005: 17; Davis 2005: 13). In short, they argue that multiculturalism threatens social cohesion, national identity and security.

In contrast to this discourse, the State Government of Victoria promotes cultural diversity and multiculturalism as one of its greatest social, cultural and economic assets, which through the promotion of respect, rights and responsibilities enhances social cohesion and harmony. As such, the Victorian Government contends that multiculturalism contributes to the strengthening of security within the state and complements an integrated counter-terrorism program that includes law enforcement, intelligence gathering and legislation. Studies pertaining to multiculturalism and social cohesion have been conducted in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia, affirming multiculturalism’s benefits (Bourne et al 2007). Yet, these studies have largely been limited to surveys of some members of ethnic and religious minorities’ attitudes, i.e., from those whom multiculturalism’s critics argue are multiculturalism’s main beneficiaries. However, there is a lack of evidence regarding whether “mainstream Australians” — for want of a better term Victorians and Australians from European-descended backgrounds, including those of Anglo-Celtic heritage — perceive multiculturalism as a means to uphold social cohesion or mitigate against terrorism or other security-related threats.

Therefore, this study’s aim is to generate new understandings on how mainstream Victorians view multiculturalism. It is specifically concerned with mainstream Victorians’ attitudes towards social harmony; whether they feel that Victoria and Australia are safe places to live and work; and if not, what threats Victorians and Australians are currently confronting. Moreover, as indicated previously, the Victorian State Government considers that maintaining social harmony is imperative for maintaining security.

It is significant to note that research for this project was conducted very shortly after a series of incidents occurred and were reported in the media which concerned Australia’s and Victoria’s Sudanese communities. In particular, the murder of Sudanese youth Liep Gony, and former Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews’ comments regarding perceptions that African immigrants were not integrating properly into Australian society. Some of the opinions recorded in this report may have been influenced by these media reports, and it is questionable whether the participants would have made similar contributions on the Sudanese and other African communities had they contributed to focus groups at a different time.

This report seeks to address the primary research questions:

Do ‘mainstream Victorians’ consider that there is a relationship between multiculturalism, security and social harmony?

Its subsequent research questions include:

If so, does multiculturalism strengthen security and social harmony or does it weaken security and social harmony?

How do mainstream Victorians define what it is to be Australian and what, if anything, do they consider to be Australian values?

What do mainstream Victorians see as the main threats to Australia and Victoria’s security?
Does Victoria and Australia's diversity enhance, hinder or have no effect on our society being secure and socially harmonious?

Between November 2007 and late January 2008, 119 Victorians aged 18 and older, coming from European backgrounds participated in a series of 15 focus groups, which were held in 10 metropolitan and 5 rural areas of the state.¹

This study yields the following conclusions, which tended to be reasonably consistent within both the rural and metropolitan groups:

- Participants generally consider Australia and Victoria to be fairly secure from outside or internal threats and they believe that they live in reasonably socially harmonious conditions. Nevertheless, they are very concerned about the prevalence of drugs, juvenile delinquency and alcohol in disrupting social harmony. Additionally, some participants in regional Victoria, conscious of the presence of critical infrastructure within their areas, believe that there are significant security threats to Australia and that all precautions must be made to prevent attacks on the Australian mainland and within the state.

- While participants believe that Australia and Victoria are more at risk from security threats such as terrorism and illegal migration now than they were 10 years ago, they also feel that Australia is much safer than other countries. Several noted that compared to the Cold War years, the degree of threats against Australia has lessened.

- Participants believe strongly that Australia’s decline in security is due to significant foreign policy factors such as the US-Australia alliance, especially Australia’s participation in the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, and the growth of global terrorism. Some participants in regional areas also noted that diseases can constitute a threat to the country and the state. While a significant proportion of the participants had to be prodded to discuss areas of national security, they were very outspoken on the need to maintain security within their own communities. Indeed, it appears as if the participants in this study are far more worried about criminal threats than other forms of violent or anti-social threats. They are also very concerned with potential threats to border security, such as illegal immigration.

- Most participants consider multiculturalism to have played a significant role in enhancing Australia economically, culturally and socially. Many contend that multiculturalism is a major factor for making Australia a very tolerant society. They also consider that multiculturalism helped transform “Australianness” into a distinctive national identity, and that it is a significant component of contemporary Australian identity.

- Although they believe that as a host society, Australia should provide the bare necessities for new immigrants upon arrival in Australia, namely job seeking assistance and language instruction, participants noted that they are most concerned with the possibility that multicultural policies may not provide sufficient incentives for migrant groups to integrate within Australian society. Most important, they are emphatic that new migrants must learn English and respect Australian culture and laws. They believe that it is extremely important to respect the new migrants’ cultures. However, they feel that multiculturalism must function within the context of mutual respect. Notably, most participants stressed that they believed that the expansion of cuisine choices in Victoria and Australia was the most beneficial consequence of multiculturalism.

- The participants did not make any explicit references that multiculturalism created any conditions which encouraged extremism and terrorism. By the same token they did not make explicit references that it prevented terrorism or extremism. However, participants in several groups noted that Australia’s multicultural policies (and other policies and practices) helped to reduce social tensions that were apparent in some ethnically and racially diverse European countries between majority and minority populations. In particular, they drew attention to tensions between Muslims and the host countries’ dominant ethnicities and religions.

- Participants overwhelmingly believe that Australian identity is not fixed to a set of a single ethnic or cultural group’s experiences. Indeed, participants implied that Australian identity is diverse and dynamic. Additionally, participants stressed that Australianness is more defined by behaviour than by ethnic origins, including obeying the laws, respecting others, integrating into Australian life and developing a working knowledge of English.

- The participants identified several qualities, attributes and practices that they felt Australians valued or constituted Australian values. These
included the fair go, mateship, treating others fairly, freedom, respect, hard work, and a robust sense of humour. However, there were some participants who queried whether or not these were unique to Australia or whether they could be considered universal to liberal democracies.

- Many participants expressed opinions and concerns that members of Victoria and Australia’s Muslim and Sudanese communities were not properly integrating with other Australians. Additionally, many participants alleged that some members of these groups did not demonstrate sufficient respect for Australian customs and laws. Participants in many groups expressed concern about the treatment of women within the country’s Muslim communities.

- Many participants were very critical of the ways that the media portray various minority groups such as Muslim and Sudanese Australians. Several participants noted that coverage of certain groups may threaten social harmony or complicate relationships between groups.

- Where individuals were personally acquainted with Muslim or Sudanese Australians they defended them within the discussions. Participants also highlighted the positive contributions that they made to their communities. Similarly, while many participants drew attention to the acts of terrorism that Al Qaeda and other groups that claim to be acting in the name of Islam have perpetrated, there were also many participants who reiterated that not all Muslims are terrorists and that there are representatives of other religious and secular causes who have engaged in political violence.

- Participants did not think that it was necessary to increase the severity of anti-terrorism laws any further or to employ measures that would circumscribe rights and freedoms beyond the present legal regime. However, they were also generally unfamiliar about which agencies enforce the anti-terrorism legislation and under what circumstances.

- Participants overwhelmingly demonstrated a strong support for law enforcement officers. They were also very concerned that Australia and Victoria’s leaders ensure that police are staffed, resourced and empowered to carry out their duties.

- A minority of participants were very critical of the previous Commonwealth Government’s foreign and domestic policies and felt that in many ways its actions and rhetoric either inflamed social tensions or increased the threat to Australia’s security.

- Participants demonstrated a distinct concern for young people. On the one hand they were concerned that young people could disrupt their communities’ social harmony. On the other hand they were worried that poor life conditions, employment prospects and insufficient numbers of leisure facilities could also have negative impact on youths’ prospects for living dignified and fulfilling lives.

- Participants stressed that they valued diversity and community. Indeed, throughout all the groups, participants indicated that they preferred and desired to live in communities with strong social bonds, amongst those from many different backgrounds and in peace and harmony.

- Although participants indicated that they were afraid of some potential flashpoints between various ethnic groups within contemporary Victoria and Australia, and occasionally expressed fears of others’ difference, they also demonstrated a sense of optimism about the country and state’s ongoing potentials for maintaining and strengthening social harmony. They did this by evaluating the experiences of previous immigrant groups and how they settled into the Australian mainstream. They also suggested that with time, the groups of more recently arrived immigrants would feel more settled, and more comfortable in their new surroundings, and would more strongly identify with Australian life, norms and culture as had previous waves of immigrants.

- Participants indicated that fear was best countered through understanding. Therefore, the participants implicitly highlighted that education can play a critical role in promoting social harmony. They also suggested that the children of immigrants who are attending schools in multicultural settings would develop the skills to excel in a diverse society like Australia.

- A significant difference between the older and newer immigrant communities revolves around the issue of welfare and work. Representatives from the older communities (mostly from Europe) noted that they were provided with work and not welfare upon entry to Australia. They were occasionally very critical of newer communities, whom they accused of not working hard enough either to earn a living or to integrate into broader society.
Based on these conclusions we make the following proposals for future consideration to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and other relevant stakeholders:

1. **Maintain a strong commitment to multiculturalism and diversity.** Many participants have indicated that they feel that they live in a socially harmonious state and country, and have expressed positive opinions towards the way in which Australia values cultural and religious diversity. They considered these to be among Australia’s key strengths as a nation. While it is true that most participants did not see a direct connection between multiculturalism and security – whether threatening or enhancing it – some have indicated that Australia and Victoria’s multicultural policies play a strong role in reducing tensions that currently plague some European societies. Multiculturalism’s role in daily life and within public affairs could be an important asset in maintaining social harmony within Victoria and Australia.

2. **Emphasize the diverse and dynamic nature of Australian identity.** Many participants emphasized that they felt that Australian identity was derived from many different heritages, and hence inherently linked to multiculturalism. They also felt that one of the strengths of Australian society was that it did not elevate the importance of any single ethnic experience at the expense of others. A minority of participants also felt that the previous Commonwealth Government, some media representatives, and other commentators may have unnecessarily increased social tensions by attempting to develop a narrow set of criteria to define and authenticate Australian national identity.

3. **Emphasize that Australian identity is based on behaviour, not heritage.** Most participants expressed their feelings that respect for the law, respect for others and developing a working knowledge of English were key factors in becoming part of Australian society and contributing to it positively.

4. **State and Commonwealth Governments and civic organizations should increase assistance for English language instruction available to immigrants and refugees who are about to enter into Australia and Victoria, and those who have recently arrived in the state.** Indeed, participants in most of the focus groups suggested that they felt it was necessary for: (a) new immigrants to learn English and (b) the host country to provide resources for language instruction to assist newcomers to the country and Victoria. Therefore, reviewing the available resources may be helpful to meet this demand adequately.

5. **State and Police officials should work very closely with Muslim and Sudanese communities’ representatives to help redress misinformation about these groups circulating within the broader Victorian public.** Although there have been many Muslim public intellectuals who have been contributing to the media and other public forums to reduce misunderstandings between Muslim Australians and the wider Australian community, there is still a need to continue and increase these activities. The Sudanese community may not yet have the array of contributors to the media to help serve as bridges to Victoria and Australia. Moreover, in both cases, politicians, civil servants and police officers who are trusted within communities should be encouraged to make joint press statements, attend functions and emphasize, where appropriate the positive contributions that Muslim and Sudanese Victorians make to the broader Victorian and Australian communities.

6. **Develop and/or enhance programs that will train newly arrived community leaders in managing the media and other leadership skills,** similar to the ones that the Australian Multicultural Foundation coordinates for young Muslims. In recent years organizations like the Australian Multicultural Foundation have been running seminars and most recently fully developed programs to instil leadership skills, such as managing the media, for young Muslims. These programs are highly successful and could be used as a model to bring young men and women from the Sudanese, and subsequently other newly arrived migrant communities, into Australian public life.

7. **Encourage more Muslim women to contribute to media discussions.** Although this is currently being addressed within existing leadership and media training sessions, it needs to be re-emphasized. The degree to which many of the study’s participants demonstrated little knowledge about Muslim women’s lives, the significance they placed on the hijab, and their belief that it symbolises Muslim women’s oppression, suggests that there is an information gap on these issues. Muslim women are best suited to engage in these matters as: (a) they are
most aware of their own circumstances, (b) they are the individuals who are most affected by such misinformation, and (c) their participation in the media discussions will help demonstrate that they are autonomous individuals who contribute much to their faith communities and the broader Victorian and Australian communities.

8. Media representatives may wish to review how they portray representatives of minority communities. While certainly not suggesting censorship, we think it may be proper for journalists, editors and sub-editors and others involved in media production to reflect upon how some stories and other news and cultural items frame members of minority groups, such as Victoria and Australia’s Muslim and Sudanese communities, and the impact that this can have on these communities and on social harmony more generally.

9. Efforts should be made to reinforce that many so-called ‘mainstream’ Victorians also share the concerns Victoria’s minorities have about the ways that the media portray Muslims, recent Sudanese immigrants and other minority ethnic and religious groups. It is plausible that this point can form a basis of moving towards mutual understanding between communities.

10. Efforts should also be made to reinforce that many so-called “mainstream” Victorians acknowledge that the overwhelming members of minority ethnic and religious communities make positive contributions to Victorian and Australian society.

11. In the same way that the Victorian Government funded and continues to fund educational activities that promote understanding about Muslim communities and Islam, similar programs are now necessary regarding the diverse African communities that have recently arrived in Australia. As concerns and fears arise largely from what is new and unfamiliar, developing understanding about newly arrived communities is critical. Therefore, it may be worth exploring the possibilities of initiating a deliberative poll, similar to the 2007 Australia Deliberates conference on Muslims for the Sudanese. Although participants in some groups alleged that some Sudanese and Muslim Victorians were engaged in anti-social behaviour, those who were familiar with members of these communities defended them and acknowledged the positive contributions that they made to their communities and Victoria. Additionally, US-based Pew Research Center surveys (Pew Center 2005), and the Australia Deliberates exercise on Australian Muslims (Steketee 2007a; Steketee 2007b; Zwart 2007a; Zwart 2007b) indicate that when groups become more familiar with each other, prejudices, potential flashpoints and suspicions diminish, particularly in relation to the majority population’s attitudes towards minorities.

12. Given the critical role of education in advancing understanding between culturally and religiously diverse communities, we recommend that in consultation with communities and scholars, the study of inter-cultural and inter-religious issues be incorporated within the core curriculum of Victorian schools. While much emphasis has previously been placed on education for immigrant communities, the matters discussed in this project suggest that it may be worth pursuing whether there is a need or desire to educate host communities on those who are newly arrived into their communities, or about to arrive in their communities. Schools have been noted as already contributing to promoting harmonious multicultural societies. Hence, various stakeholders have the opportunity to increase and enhance the content in Victorian schools which they devote towards inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding. In this way, Australia and Victoria may find it helpful to consider following some of the United Kingdom’s inter-faith and inter-cultural education initiatives.

13. Develop strategies to increase the significance of inter-faith activities to representatives of host communities. In previous research conducted on social cohesion, representatives of migrant and minority groups stressed the importance of inter-faith activities in generating understanding between communities. However, the participants in this study did not mention this.

14. Increase public awareness of the distribution of counter-terrorist stakeholders’ jurisdictions and responsibilities. Participants generally felt that the existing anti-terrorist legislation is sufficient in the current circumstances. However, they indicated that they were unaware of the distribution of enforcement duties amongst Victoria Police, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).
Introduction

Australia is generally considered to be among the most secure and stable states, and is consistently ranked as one of the world’s most open and corruption free governments (Transparency International 2007). In addition, Australia is one of the world’s most ethnically, religiously and culturally diverse societies. With its traditions of multiculturalism, Australia is comprised of millions of citizens and residents from varying identities. Moreover, Australia thrives on and celebrates this diversity. Our understanding of multiculturalism in this report draws on contemporary academic and legal interpretations. Hence, we consider multiculturalism as “policies and practices that protect and celebrate difference amongst ethnic and religious communities,…which include rights for them within the political system” (Ang and Stretton 1998 cited in Lentini 2007: 43), and which are designed primarily to foster reciprocal respect and obligation amongst all citizens towards groups other than their own, the state and the practices, laws and values embedded in the Australian Constitution (Commonwealth of Australia 1999; Commonwealth of Australia 2003; Victorian Government 2004).

Although Australia has indeed flourished from the combination of well functioning and respected political institutions, and has earned a reputation for facilitating conditions for its citizens to prosper under both Labor and Coalition Governments, it has not been without tensions, including various manifestations of political violence, such as terrorism, and inter-ethnic conflicts, such as those that occurred in Cronulla in 2005. All terrorists—whether their concerns are religious, secular or even environmental, and whether they are from majority or minority groups—advocate some form of identity politics (Nagtzaam and Lentini 2008: 111-12). Multiculturalism, however, is concerned with managing identity politics in a civil manner. As Australia and Victoria are both so ethnically diverse, and are comprised of citizens and residents from so many identities and backgrounds, it is worthy querying whether so-called “mainstream Victorians” consider there is any correspondence between multiculturalism and security, and how they feel it impacts upon them and the state’s other ethnic and religious communities.

Project rationale

The project ‘Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria’ is therefore concerned with the relationship between perceptions of multiculturalism, national and human security. According to the Human Security Centre, “The traditional goal of ‘national security’ has been the defence of the state from external threats. The focus of human security, by contrast, is the protection of individuals.” They state further (Human Security Centre 2005: viii):

Proponents of the ‘narrow’ concept of human security focus on violent threats to individuals or, as [former] UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan puts it, “the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence”.

Proponents of the ‘broad’ concept of human security argue that the threat agenda should include hunger, disease and natural disasters because these kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined. Human security policy, they argue, should seek to protect these people from these threats as well as violence. In its broadest formulations the human security agenda also encompasses economic insecurity and ‘threats to human dignity’.

Based on this definition, this project is situated within the broadest conceptions of security. The Victorian Government recognises that “one of the first duties of any government is to keep its community safe and secure” (State Government of Victoria 2006: 11). Moreover, it is also important for the state to understand which factors may cause concerns amongst its citizens’ conceptions of how secure they are. There may be circumstances in which threats to human dignity, which multiculturalism seeks to redress, may arise and a very small minority of representatives from marginalized communities—or those which perceive themselves to be marginalized engage in terrorism partly because they consider their dignity as citizens, believers in a particular faith, etc. has been threatened. Disgruntled members of Australian and overseas Muslim communities have planned or are accused of planning terrorist attacks in Australia, based at least

Part II: Project overview
in part, on perceived issues of dignity (concerning Muslims in Australia and abroad) (Lentini 2008a).

In addition, it is not only the fringe of so-called minority identity groups who feel that they are threatened which engage in violence. Often, when a small number of representatives from ethnic or religious majorities feel that their rights have been, or are perceived as being threatened, they too can engage in violent acts in order to ‘reclaim’ the status and privileges they feel have been taken away from them by the state granting special favours to minorities. This was particularly evident in the US during the Clinton Administration, which the right wing of politics claimed favoured affirmative action towards ethnic minorities, gay men and women, as well as reproductive rights for women, at their expense (Barkun 2000; Dobratz and Shanks-Miele 1997/2001; Mariani 1998; Harmon 2003; Sprinzak 1995). Additionally, it is worth noting that similar groups which espouse white separatist and supremacist tendencies and are willing to engage in violence also exist in Australia, and seek to ‘reclaim Australia for Australians’ (Lentini 2008a). It is plausible that the recent increase in anti-Semitic violence within Australia and Victoria may partially be attributed to an increase in such attitudes (Rowbotham 2007: 2; Dowling 2008: 11).

That Australia and Victoria in particular, have placed such an importance in multiculturalism in maintaining social harmony in the face of growing tensions, means that it is not only minority groups’ (Bouma et al 2007), but also ethnic and religious majorities’ attitudes, especially those from Culturally, Religiously and Religiously Diverse (hereafter, CRALD) communities i.e., from those whom multiculturalism’s critics would argue are multiculturalism’s main beneficiaries (Bouma et al 2007). However, if multiculturalism is to remain a vibrant policy option and dynamic component of Victorian and Australian identity, it must be supported by those from the ethnic majorities or for want of a better term ‘mainstream Australians’, largely Victorians and Australians from European-descended backgrounds, including those of Anglo-Celtic heritage.

Therefore, this study aims to generate new understandings on how mainstream Victorians view multiculturalism. It is specifically concerned with mainstream Victorians’ attitudes towards social harmony, whether they feel that Victoria and Australia are safe places to live and work, and if not what threats Victorians and Australians are confronting. Moreover, as indicated previously, the Victorian State Government considers that maintaining social harmony is imperative for maintaining security. This report seeks to address the primary research question:

Do ‘mainstream Victorians’ consider that there is a relationship between multiculturalism, security and social harmony?

Its subsequent research questions include:

Does multiculturalism strengthen security and social harmony or does it weaken security and social harmony?

How do mainstream Victorians define what it is to be Australian and what, if anything, do they consider to be Australian values?

What do mainstream Victorians see as the main threats to Australia and Victoria’s security?

Does Victoria and Australia’s diversity enhance, hinder or have no effect on our society being secure and socially harmonious?

The remainder of this report comprises three further main parts and four appendices. Part III contains an overview of multiculturalism and diversity in Victoria and Australia. Part IV provides the main findings of the focus groups. Part V includes the project’s main conclusions. Appendix 1 includes an overview of the focus group sample and methodology. The second appendix incorporates the schedule of questions. Appendix 3 provides a brief overview of multiculturalism in Victoria. The final appendix contains excerpts from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s First National Security Statement which pertain to the issues addressed in this study.
Part III: Multiculturalism and diversity in Victoria and Australia

On the evolution of multiculturalism in Australia

Although multicultural policies in Australia have been enacted and enforced for over three decades, they have not been universally accepted, particularly amongst some from the so-called ethnic majorities. While Australia has been described as having “a history of exclusion”, especially in relation to settlers’ violence against Indigenous Australians, harsh treatment against Chinese migrants during the 1850s Gold Rush, and the White Australia Policy which excluded non-European migrants (Halafoff 2006), Australian identity has always been diverse. Indeed Marion Dixson argues that more recently it encompasses at least three central groups: Aboriginal Australian identities; an Anglo-Celtic “core”; and the identities of “new Australians” (Dixson 1999: 18).

From the 1940s until the 1970s immigration policy in Australia was focussed on assimilation to a monocultural “Anglo-Saxon and Celtic ideal”. In the 1960s the exclusivist nature of this policy received much international criticism. In his 1973 speech “A Multi-Cultural Society for the Future”, Al Grassby, the Whitlam Government’s Immigration Minister was the first to use the term multicultural officially in Australia, emphasising the need to affirm diversity with reference to the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and also to a commitment to common good (Theophanous 1995:4-9; Hollinsworth 2006).

In 1978, the Fraser Government began implementing the first national multicultural policies according to the recommendations of the Galbally Report and in 1979 the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was established (DIAC 2007). The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act 1979 outlined the following objectives:

(a) To develop among the members of the Australian community – (i) an awareness of the diverse cultures within the community that arose as a result of migration; (ii) an appreciation of the contributions of those cultures to the enrichment of the broader community; (b) To promote tolerance, understanding, harmonious relations and mutual esteem among the different cultural groups and ethnic communities in Australia; (c) To promote a cohesive Australian society, and to assist in promoting an environment that affords the members of the different cultural groups and ethnic communities the opportunities to participate more fully in Australian society and achieve their own potential. (Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1979 cited in Theophanous 1995:17)

Zubrzycki’s Multiculturalism for All Australians: Our Developing Nationhood (1982) placed multiculturalism “at the heart of Australia’s developing nationhood and national identity” (Galligan and Roberts 2003:7). It continued to receive support from the Hawke Labor Government when it entered office in 1983. In 1987, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was replaced by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In 1989, the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, received bipartisan support (DIAC 2003) and defined multiculturalism as follows (OMA 1989):

In a descriptive sense multicultural is simply a term which describes the cultural and ethnic diversity of contemporary Australia. We are, and will remain, a multicultural society.

As a public policy, multiculturalism encompasses government measures designed to respond to that diversity. It plays no part in migrant selection. It is a policy for managing the consequences of cultural diversity in the interests of the individual and society as a whole.

The Commonwealth Government has identified three dimensions of multicultural policy:

• cultural identity: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;
• social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; and
• economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilize effectively the skills and
talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

... They apply equally to all Australians, whether Aboriginal, Anglo-Celtic or non-English speaking background; and whether they were born in Australia or overseas.

There are also limits to Australian multiculturalism. These may be summarized as follows:

- multicultural policies are based upon the premises that all Australians should have an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia, to its interests and future first and foremost;
- multicultural policies require all Australians to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society - the Constitution and the rule of law, tolerance and equality, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes; and
- multicultural policies impose obligations as well as conferring rights: the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values.

As a necessary response to the reality of Australia's cultural diversity, multicultural policies aim to realize a better Australia characterized by an enhanced degree of social justice and economic efficiency.

However, concurrently, there were emerging challenges to multiculturalism. Geoffrey Blainey was among the harshest critics in the early 1980s (Theophanous 1995:33-39), while The Fitzgerald Report of 1988 was said to have “opened the Pandora's box of multiculturalism”. Its recommendations were “strongly nationalistic” and emphasised “Australian identity” as preferable to multiculturalism (see Galligan and Roberts 2003:9). John Howard, who was Leader of the Commonwealth Opposition at that time, criticised multiculturalism as an “aimless divisive policy” (Galligan and Roberts 2003:10) and called for a “common Australian identity” to replace multiculturalism (Galligan and Roberts 2003:1). The Liberal-National Coalition lost the 1990 and 1993 federal elections, while the Labor Government promoted multiculturalism as an economic asset facilitating global trade (Lopez 2005:39).

During the 1990s, and leading up to the 1996 Liberal-National Coalition election victory, opponents of multiculturalism made consistent claims that various immigrant groups were either threatening to the Australian social fabric or that their cultures, beliefs or practices were incompatible with mainstream Australian life (Anglo-Celtic and Northern and Western European). Many within the “mainstream” of Australian society felt that “their culture” and “their identity” was being marginalized in the rush to celebrate those of the newly arrived and indigenous communities, and that their heritage was being either lost, diluted or given a secondary status. Such attitudes were visibly manifested in the neo-populist rhetoric and mobilization of Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party and grew stronger during the Howard years. During this period, the government and supportive commentators attempted to homogenize Australian national identity as one which was largely embedded in European, but particularly Anglo-Celtic traditions (Markus 2001).

With a change of government in 1996 the OMA became absorbed into the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and in 1997, a new National Multicultural Advisory Council (NMAC) was formed. It launched the Australian Multiculturalism for a New Century: Towards Inclusiveness report in 1999 and the government issued its new multicultural policy, A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia. Subsequently the NMAC was dissolved the same year (DIAC 2007). Australian multiculturalism was thus elaborately defined in A New Agenda (Commonwealth of Australia 1999:6-7):

Australia is comprised of people who were born in this country and who have migrated here. Together, we have witnessed many changes in our nation. Our many shared experiences have produced a complex, cosmopolitan society, but together we have met and overcome challenges and striven for harmonious relationships between Australians from all backgrounds.

For its part, the Commonwealth Government has worked to ensure that our cultural diversity and all its implications are appropriately addressed through the development of policies and principles based on tolerance, humanity and mutual respect. A particular commitment by the Government has been to ensure that all Australians have the opportunity to be active and equal participants in Australian society, free to live their lives and maintain their cultural traditions.
But the democratic foundations of our society contain a balance of rights and obligations. The freedom of all Australians in practice is dependent on their abiding by mutual civic obligations. Thus, all Australians are expected to have an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and principles common to Australian society. These are the Constitution, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, the rule of law, tolerance, and equality – including equality of the sexes.

Within this broad framework, each individual and group is welcome to make a contribution to the common good. We do not seek to impose a sameness on all our people. Nor do we seek to discourage the further evolution of the Australian culture which already includes the heritage of Indigenous Australians, our British and Irish settlers, our Australian-grown customs, and those of our more recently-arrived migrant groups. We are, in reality as well as by definition, a multicultural nation.

The term **Australian multiculturalism** summarises the way we address the challenges and opportunities of our cultural diversity. It is a term which recognises and celebrates Australia’s cultural diversity. It accepts and respects the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage within an overriding commitment to Australia and the basic structures and values of Australian democracy.

It also refers specifically to the strategies, policies and programs that are designed to:

- make our administrative, social and economic infrastructure more responsive to the rights, obligations and needs of our culturally diverse population;
- promote social harmony among the different cultural groups in our society; and
- optimise the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians.

Debates regarding diversity, as well as inclusion and exclusion within Australian society began to harden around 2000 in the wake of several incidents involving newly arrived communities. These included, for instance, the fall out from gang rapes perpetrated by young Lebanese males on European-descended women in New South Wales, the increase in asylum seekers and refugees from Muslim-majority and Arab states, as well as the 9/11 attacks (Collins et al 2000; Deen 2003: 270-326; Poynting et al 2004, Bouma et al 2007).

In 2003, the Federal Government updated its multicultural policy releasing *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity*, which stated (Commonwealth of Australia 2003:6):

> Australian multiculturalism recognises, accepts, respects and celebrates cultural diversity. It embraces the heritage of Indigenous Australians, early European settlement, our Australian-grown customs and those of the diverse range of migrants now coming to this country.

The freedom of all Australians to express and share their cultural values is dependent on their abiding by mutual civic obligations. All Australians are expected to have an overriding loyalty to Australia and its people, and to respect the basic structures and principles underwriting our democratic society. These are the Constitution, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, the rule of law, acceptance and equality.

These civic obligations reflect the unifying values of Australian Citizenship. Australian Citizenship involves reciprocal responsibilities and privileges and enables individuals to become fully contributing members of the Australian community. Citizenship is a strong unifying force in our diverse multicultural community. Our commitment to and defence of Australian values of equality, democracy and freedom unite us in our diverse origins, and enhance the ability of us all to participate fully in all spheres of Australian society.

However, the 7 July 2005 bombings in London, perpetrated by British Muslim youths, generated debates that multiculturalism constituted a threat to democratic, multi-ethnic and multi-faith states, such as Australia (Bone 2005: 13; Albrechtsen 2005: 15; Doepfner 2005: 9; The Australian 2005: 14; Stone 2005: 17; Davis 2005: 13). According to Georgiou (2005b):

> The analysis generally runs along the following lines: multiculturalism has encouraged Muslims to maintain their identity without becoming part of the community at large; this has led to separatism, the free propagation of extremist views and contempt for the Australian nation and its core values.
In European debates, multiculturalism has been criticised for “offering no central core of values to provide a shared identity”; this however does not apply in the Australian context where as early as 1979, under Fraser, and certainly by 1989 under Hawke, multiculturalism has affirmed commitment to the law and common values above and alongside respect for diversity and equity of opportunity (Georgiou 2005b) as illustrated in excerpts of the previously cited multicultural policies.

The 7 July 2005 terrorist attacks in London produced heated discussions on national values and the qualities that constituted Australianness and generated a so-called “Values Debate” (Halafoff 2006). The debate largely concentrated on whether or not Australian Muslims could or would adhere to Australian laws and customs, and calls for overt Islamic symbols, such as the women’s headscarf or hijab to be banned from public schools (Grattan 2005; Herald Sun 2005). Nevertheless, Muslim spokespersons defended their positions, and articulated that Islamic principles were not incompatible with Australian customs (Aly 2005a; Aly 2005b). They were supported by many high level politicians from Liberal (Georgiou 2005a) and Labor (Lawrence 2006:35), and their own spokespersons.

Inter-faith and inter-ethnic tensions escalated in December 2005 in the wake of violence in Cronulla, New South Wales. The ensuing riots were a result of an escalation of confrontations between many Lebanese-Australians living in the New South Wales suburbs who frequented Cronulla Beach and local residents. On 11 December 2005 groups of local, European descended Australians attacked so-called people “of Middle Eastern Appearance”. Some men largely of Lebanese origins conducted revenge attacks throughout the town and adjoining suburbs and this heightened tensions between the communities. Overt displays of Australian national flags, and some of the Cronulla residents’ claims that they were the “true” Australians, transformed what was initially intended to be a show of local solidarity into a spontaneous demonstration of an exclusivist Australian national identity. Additionally, there has been some evidence that suggested that several right-wing groups exploited the situation and recast the event as an example of “the White Race standing up to Muslims” (Halafoff 2006). Subsequently, the vociferously anti-migrant political party Australia First has used this event as a means of building its membership and entering into New South Wales electoral politics. Following the Cronulla riots, 75 per of Australians reported “there is an underlying racism in Australia” (ACNielsen cited in Shannahan 2005). Significantly, however, most Australians did not harbour such exclusivist attitudes. Concurrently between 70 per cent (Newspoll cited in Shannahan 2005) and 81 per cent (ACNielsen cited in Shannahan 2005) of Australians said they supported multiculturalism.

These debates continued throughout 2006 and 2007 (Maiden 2006; Lewis 2006; Morris 2006). Additionally, the Howard Government changed the name of the country’s department for managing inter-ethnic and multicultural issues from the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, and introduced a controversial citizenship test in 2007 (Das 2007: 7).

From 2005 there were persistent reports and criticisms concerning the behaviour and alleged criminality of African, but especially Sudanese youths who had recently arrived in Australia. One academic went so far as to contend that they significantly increased deviant behaviour and caused division within the communities where they resided (Roberts 2005: 5; McDonald 2005: 5). In 2007, reports of Sudanese violence and criminality in areas of Victoria such as Noble Park increased. Tragically in that year a 19-year old Sudanese youth, Liep Gony was killed and there were other attacks on young Sudanese males immediately thereafter coinciding with negative media attention on the community (Davis and Hart 2007: 3; Dubecki 2007: 1; Grattan 2007; Harrison 2007: 2; Medew 2007: 4). In the cases of the Middle Easterners, Muslims and the Sudanese, commentators blamed multiculturalism for generating an atmosphere in which none of the groups were integrating, and that the pressure on police to be culturally sensitive, in deference to multiculturalism, inhibited them from properly and effectively discharging their duties (Kerbaj 2007: 3; Hart and Maiden 2007: 27).

Research for this project began shortly after Gony’s death, as well as a series of press reports exhibiting fear of the Sudanese community, and an announcement that the Howard Government was to begin reducing the number of visas it would issue to people from Africa (Farouque et al 2007: 2; Topsfield and Rood 2007: 1, 4; The Age 2007: 14; Hall 2007: 15; Topsfield et al 2007: 1, 6).
Multiculturalism and Victoria: A brief history

Multiculturalism occupies an important place in Victorian society and politics, and it has enjoyed strong bipartisan support for a number of decades. Former state Premiers Jeff Kennett and Steve Bracks, and present Premier John Brumby included the portfolio of Minister for Multicultural Affairs amongst their own responsibilities. Moreover, the Bracks and Brumby Governments have seen how multiculturalism can assist in combating terrorism. Announcing the establishment of Monash University’s Global Terrorism Research Centre (GTReC), then-Victorian Premier Steve Bracks argued that, “… a strong and vibrant multicultural society, where there is respect and tolerance for others, has a key part to play in tackling the root causes of potential terrorism within our own society”, and that “a robust, multicultural community was part of the ‘first line of defence’ in the fight against terrorism” (AAP 19 October 2006; Monash Media Office 2006). In Protecting Our Community: Attacking the Causes of Terrorism, the Victorian Government stated that its “long-term view and strategy to attack the causes of terrorism” includes “re-affirming Australia’s commitment to multiculturalism” (State Government of Victoria, 2005: 4). A recent joint study between GTReC members, members of Monash University’s Criminology section, and the Victorian Police Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit identified the importance of multicultural policies in counter-terrorist community policing (Pickering et al, 2007).

However, Victorian governments have been concerned with multiculturalism for decades. Successive governments have played important roles in contributing to multiculturalism within the state and have long viewed multiculturalism as important for both Victoria and Australia’s development. Victorian governments “have been at the forefront in the development of many multicultural policies” (Clyne and Markus, 2001: 84). Victorian governments’ and community leaders’ pioneering roles in developing policies of multiculturalism can be attributed to the fact that high migration rates, and therefore diversity, have been a notable part of Victorian history. In particular, Clyne and Markus (2001) note the culturally diverse population which was attracted to the Victorian goldfields in the 19th Century. Although intermarriage and education acts passed in the late nineteenth century, and restrictive immigration policies had a homogenising impact, the post-war immigration boom again increased Victoria’s cultural diversity (Clyne and Markus, 2001: 82). According to the 2006 Census, 43.6 percent of Victoria’s population was described as either born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas (ABS cited in VMC 2006: 1). The 2001 Census indicates a similar figure of 43.5 percent (ABS cited in VMC 2006: 11). The need for multicultural policy to maintain social cohesion has therefore been considered imperative by numerous Victorian governments and community leaders.

Victoria played an important role in the early development of interpreting services, and recommended appointing interpreters to public hospitals as early as the 1950s (Clyne and Markus, 2001:84). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, in Victoria as well as nationally and internationally, values of acculturation and assimilation were being replaced by ideas of diversity and multiculturalism. From the 1970s onwards, Victorian governments and civic organisations have been active in promoting, institutionalising and strengthening multiculturalism. During the 1970s the dissemination of information relating to multiculturalism and the attitudes and experiences of migrants increased through conferences on the situation of migrants in the workplace, throughout the education system, and in media and broadcasting. Various organisations relating to and representing migrant communities were established, including the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (EECV) in 1974, which was established as a voluntary, community based organisation to represent migrant communities in Victoria, and share their experiences with governments. During the 1970s, policies relating to languages in schools and broadcasting were both questioned and introduced.

This increased during the 1980s and multiculturalism became further embedded within Victorian law, society and politics following the implementation of the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act in 1983, and the introduction of the terms “race”, “religion” and “culture” in the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (1984). By this time, interpreting services in Victoria were well developed; multi-lingual media had been established, and language services were increasingly available throughout the education system.

In the 1990s these policies were further developed and legitimised as the term “multiculturalism” became more prominent in public policy, particularly through the Kennett Government’s establishment of


According to the current Multicultural Victoria Act (2004), the principles of multiculturalism are to recognise and promote cultural diversity in Victoria, outlining the importance of:

(a) Mutual respect and understanding for all Victorians regardless of their cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds;
(b) The promotion and preservation of this diversity and cultural heritage by individuals and institutions;
(c) The encouragement of co-operation between people of different backgrounds so as to continue to build a positive and progressive future;
(d) Equal opportunities and access to participate in and contribute to social, cultural, economic and political life of the State; and
(e) The responsibility of all Victorians to abide by the State’s laws and respect the democratic processes under which those laws are made (Victoria Government 2004: s.4(3)).

Under the Act, the VMC has a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion in this diverse community. The Commission’s functions are defined in the Act as: ensuring that its objectives are met to the “maximum extent that is practicable”; to report and make recommendations to the government, departments and other bodies on multicultural affairs; “to advise the Minister on factors inhibiting the development of harmonious community relations”; to consult with relevant bodies and people to determine the needs of Victoria’s diverse communities; and to maintain and further develop harmonious community relations; and to facilitate community input regarding meeting the objectives of the VMC (Victoria Government 2004: s.8). In 2008, the Multicultural Victoria Act was amended to enhance the functions of the VMC and to formalise some of the changes to the VMC following its merger with VOMA. The Premier described the amendments as “an opportunity for Parliament to reiterate to Victorian communities our commitment to support cultural, racial, religious and linguistic diversity in the State” (Brumby 2008).

Further detail on the evolution of multiculturalism policy, institutions, legislation and practice in Victoria is provided in Appendix 3.

Victoria’s cultural and religious diversity

As the data in Tables 1-3 suggest, while Australia, Victoria and Melbourne are all religiously diverse, the majority of all their populations identify with some form of Christianity. However, both Victoria and Melbourne are more religiously diverse than the rest of the country. Moreover, Melbourne’s population has higher percentages of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews and believers from other faiths than the rest of Victoria and Australia.

Believers are concentrated in pockets throughout Victoria. Claire Miller notes that there are several “faith belts” which exist throughout the state and Melbourne. Basing her arguments on 2001 Census data she notes (Miller 2005a:12):

Melbourne has only one area that could truly be described as a Bible belt. The foothills and plains to the south of the Dandenong Ranges, around Knox, Berwick and Cranbourne, are home to 704,829 Christians, but barely 1,100 of the other four main religions combined. Whittlesea to the north is a distant second, with 73,974 Christians, and is a more mixed community with 5,673 Muslims, 3,326 Buddhists and 1,057 Hindus.

…Melbourne’s Muslims tend to live in the northern suburbs around Broadmeadows (13,038), Keilor (4,627), Sunshine (3,269) and Coburg/Moreland (7,772) but also in the southeast in Greater Dandenong (8,667) and Casey (2,959).

But Buddhists are also strong in Broadmeadows and Coburg (2,772); Keilor and Sunshine (14,905); and Greater Dandenong (16,678). Hindus number in their thousands in these areas as well, or adjoining municipalities such as Kingston (1,298), Monash (2,518) and Whittlesea (1,057).
Jewish residents are scattered throughout the faith belts in small numbers but are most numerous in the inner-south-east in Glen Eira (19,480), Port Phillip (3,484) and Stonington (2,491). By comparison, Christians in these municipalities number 73,462 in total, Buddhists 5,864, Muslims 2,254 and Hindus 1,775. Nevertheless, these patterns of religious settlement do not equate with the existence of religious ghettos. According to Gary D. Bouma and Ian R. Dobson, in order for an area to constitute a ghetto the inhabitants of a specific area must be members of minority populations that possess a level of ethnic, racial, religious or cultural homogeneity of two-thirds or more. Basing their observations on 2001 Census data they maintain that, “the most specifically concentrated religious groups are Jews in the postcode of Caulfield. Caulfield is 42.2 per cent Jewish and 14.9 per cent of Victorian Jews live there” (Bouma and Dobson 2005: 9). Hence, they maintain that “Victoria’s patterns of religious residential concentration are a long way off from these instances” of where they would constitute ghettos (Bouma and Dobson 2005: 10). Miller shares this opinion. (Miller 2005a: 12). Moreover, these areas of religious settlement are changing.

Table 1 Australian religious diversity – 2006 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>418,757</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>12,665,834</td>
<td>63.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>148,127</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>340,390</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>88,826</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>109,020</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>3,706,552</td>
<td>18.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Inc. Not Stated)</td>
<td>2,357,782</td>
<td>11.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,855,288</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2006 Census Catalogue No. 2068.0 – 2006 Census Tables: 2006 Census of Population and Housing Australia; Religious Affiliation by Sex By Usual Place of Residence

Table 2 Victorian religious diversity – 2006 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>132,634</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>2,985,800</td>
<td>60.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>42,310</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>109,370</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>41,105</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>26,611</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>1,007,413</td>
<td>20.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Inc. Not Stated)</td>
<td>587,180</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,932,423</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2006 Census Catalogue No. 2068.0 – 2006 Census Tables: 2006 Census of Population and Housing (Victoria) State Religious Affiliation by Sex By Usual Place of Residence
Just as Australia, Victoria and Melbourne are religiously diverse, they are also all ethnically diverse. Respectively 22.18 per cent, 23.71 per cent and 28.81 per cent of Australians, Victorians and Melbournians were born overseas. This again indicates that Victoria has greater degrees of diversity than Australia, and that Melbourne is more diverse than Victoria. In addition, both Victoria and Melbourne have higher percentages of persons born overseas from each major region than Australia does. Notable exceptions would include that Australia has higher percentages of Australians born in North East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and North-West Europe than Victoria. Moreover, the percentage of North-West European born Melbournians is lower than the national average. Therefore, it is possible to claim that Melbourne is on the whole more cosmopolitan and diverse than both Victoria and Australia (See Tables 4-6 and Figures 1 and 2).

### Table 3 Melbourne's religious diversity – 2006 Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>126,082</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>2,117,337</td>
<td>58.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinduism</td>
<td>40,639</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>103,187</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>40,546</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religions</td>
<td>22,481</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>717,717</td>
<td>19.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Inc. Not Stated)</td>
<td>424,601</td>
<td>11.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3,592,590</td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2006 Census Catalogue No. 2068.0 – 2006 Census Tables 2006 Census of Population and Housing Melbourne (Statistical Division) – Vic.; Religious Affiliation by Sex By Usual Place of Residence

### Table 4 Australians according to place of birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>14,073,151</td>
<td>70.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>4,405,216</td>
<td>22.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Inc. Not Stated)</td>
<td>1,376,921</td>
<td>6.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>19,855,288</td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 5 Victorians according to place of birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of the population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>3,434,478</td>
<td>69.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>1,169,852</td>
<td>23.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Inc. Not Stated)</td>
<td>328,094</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4,932,424</td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2006 Census Catalogue No. 2068.0 – Census Tables. 2006 Census of Population and Housing Victoria (State); Country of Birth of person (Minor Groups) by Sex; Count of Persons (excludes overseas visitors). Based on place of usual residence.
Not only are Melbourne and Victoria’s populations ethnically diverse, their patterns of settlement reflect diversity and dispersion. Claire Miller writes (2005b: 12-13):

“The ability to disperse is another key to multicultural success, according to [former Victorian Premier Steve] Bracks. “If you look at Melbourne, there are more middle- and lower-income suburbs which people can migrate to and settle in. Sydney has fewer and there is a greater disparity between reasonably wealthy or well-to-do suburbs, and poorer, low income suburbs. So there tends to be more of an enclave position in Sydney where, through demographic reasons and cost pressures people are more likely to congregate in certain suburbs.”

… Even in the few areas where one or two foreign-born nationalities number in their thousands, the overall community is still mixed. The pattern belies the popular perceptions that some suburbs have been transformed into ethnic ghettos. In Springvale Road, Springdale, most shop signs are in Vietnamese or Chinese as well as English but that only seems to mean these people run the businesses.

… Some cultural clustering, however is apparent. Where the English are found in significant numbers, so are the Scots and New Zealanders. Or the Indians and Sri Lankans, who live with the English in the new estate areas of Hallam, Hampton Park, and Endeavour Hills. The trend reflects the middle class, skilled profile of migrants from South Asia, but perhaps also a cultural affinity with the British after so long under colonial rule.

She devotes significant attention to the City of Greater Dandenong’s level of ethnic diversity (Miller 2005b: 13).
The City of Greater Dandenong is the most culturally diverse of all, so much so that no one nationality dominates. In Dandenong itself, the top three foreign-born groups in 2001 came from Sri Lanka, India and Yugoslavia, but together they made up less than 20 per cent of the total residents born overseas.

Dandenong North’s top three groups came from Sri Lanka, England and Italy (with a combined 21 per cent), while in Keysborough and Noble Park it was the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Sri Lankans (combined 25-30 per cent).

In total, 54 per cent of the City of Greater Dandenong’s residents are foreign-born, from 151 countries; 48 per cent have non-English-speaking backgrounds. The composition reflects the municipality’s industrial base, which traditionally provided jobs for new arrivals over the past 50 years, relatively cheap housing and Immigration Department units providing temporary accommodation for refugees.

**Previous research findings**

Results from recent projects in which GTReC researchers have participated indicate that multiculturalism has important contributions to make towards maintaining social cohesion and security in Victoria (Cahill et al. 2004; Bouma et al. 2007; Pickering et al. 2007). However, most of this information has been generated from interviews and focus groups with members of CRALD communities. This research has indicated that global crisis events—such as the 9/11 attacks and subsequent strikes in places such as Bali, Madrid and London—have had a profound impact on CRALD communities.

The primary effects of these events have been to increase expressions of negativity towards CRALD communities and to decrease their sense of security and well-being in Australia (Bouma et al. 2007). However, despite the negative impact of global crisis events, CRALD communities have responded with an increase in positive initiatives, particularly the promotion of multi-faith dialogues. Applied to Muslim communities in particular—for they have borne the brunt of fall out from the terrorist attacks in New York, Bali, London, and elsewhere—these initiatives are usually designed to promote a wider understanding of Islam and Muslim lifestyles among the wider community.

However, there is also evidence of growing tensions, and future events of similar magnitudes to those of 9/11, or the 7/7 bombings in London could place further strains on social cohesion. Among CRALD communities there is therefore widespread support for initiatives designed to buttress multiculturalism against future shocks (Bouma et al. 2007). Belying their expressions of faith in the integrity of Victoria’s multicultural character is evidence that CRALD communities are under increasing pressure and that some segments of these communities are beginning to feel that their place in society is now in question. These pressures can be measured by data showing increased levels of racially and religiously based hate crimes as well as by the prevalence of anecdotal evidence within certain communities pointing to growing levels of social marginalisation (Bouma et al. 2007; Pickering et al. 2007).

CRALD communities have commended Victorian and Queensland Governments for maintaining and promoting a commitment to multiculturalism and to working together with communities, particularly through community policing initiatives and promotion of multi-faith initiatives, towards a sense of common security (Bouma et al. 2007; Pickering et al. 2007). They have also considered these state governments’ policies a refreshing contrast to what they viewed were the divisive and exclusive discourse and policies of the Howard Government and media (Bouma et al 2007).
Part IV: Key findings

The following section summarises so-called “mainstream Australians’” perceptions of multiculturalism, security and social harmony, and the extent to which they viewed these issues as inter-related.

Good and bad things about the area

Good things

In most focus groups the participants stressed that they found issues of convenience to be among their residential areas’ most attractive features. Participants in South East Metro, Inner North, Shepparton and Dandenong groups specifically mentioned they were very pleased with their access to shopping centres and other amenities such as leisure centres and places for other social activities. Some participants in Shepparton, Dandenong, the Mornington Peninsula and Morwell also felt that their location or access to major cities, especially Melbourne and the CBD, or beaches (Mornington Peninsula) were among the most positive features of their areas of residence. However, some participants in Morwell and Mildura felt most content being free of the traffic and congestion of major metropolitan life.

Bad things

Participants in the groups generated four types of responses to this question, and they focused on (1) behavioural; (2) economic and climatic; (3) infrastructural and service; and (4) residency turnover and development factors.

Those who contributed to the focus groups voiced an overwhelming sense of concern with various forms of criminal, deviant or anti-social behaviours. Some participants in the South East Metro focus groups suggested that they felt that the general lack of respect that people demonstrated towards each other within their local communities as well as throughout the state needed to be corrected. In addition, participants in the Inner North, Dandenong and Mildura groups were very worried about the presence of drugs in their neighbourhoods and within Victoria. Contributors to the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Shepparton, Dandenong and Mornington Peninsula groups raised their disapproval of what they perceived to be the persistence of “hooning”, juvenile delinquency, and vandalism.

Other responses concentrated on economic and climatic conditions. Participants in Mildura, Shepparton, and Morwell were very concerned with what they considered to be increasing unemployment rates, poverty and poor labour conditions, including what they viewed as declining labour rights and collective bargaining provisions. Both groups in Mildura indicated that drought conditions were currently among residents’ main threats to their city’s well-being, including its economy.

Participants in regional areas were most concerned with shortages of various types of services and facilities. Mildura, Shepparton and Morwell participants all commented on the need for improved health care facilities and health care professionals, especially physicians. Some Shepparton participants highlighted that there was a distinct lack of specialists or facilities that addressed men’s health issues. Mildura, Shepparton and Mornington Peninsula focus group participants drew attention to the need to increase the availability of leisure activities and facilities, particularly for young people. Some residents of the more metropolitan based groups drew attention to what they considered to be poor lighting within parts of the city (Dandenong) or a shortage of parking spaces (Mornington Peninsula).

Issues of residential and commercial development and high rates of residency turnover were among the main concerns of participants from the (mostly) metropolitan based focus groups. Development, frequent construction projects, and gentrification preoccupied participants from the South East Metropolitan, Inner North and Altona focus groups. Some participants in the Inner North focus groups indicated that the persistent building and construction and the loss of green spaces and when taken into combination with what they considered to be high turnover rates within their neighbourhoods suggested they felt a sense of “powerlessness” in regards to maintaining their communities.
The importance of diversity and community

Two themes are of considerable importance that emerged from this series of questions, especially in matters pertaining to security and multiculturalism. First, although it will be evident from what follows in this report that many participants maintain critical attitudes towards some demographic groups within Victoria, most participants from all the sessions highlighted the importance and desirability of living in diverse communities. Second, participants in several groups underlined the importance of “community” and the desire either to rebuild, maintain or increase bonds with fellow residents, like the participants claimed they were (or they perceived them to be) several decades ago.

While most participants felt that convenience issues constituted the more positive things about their areas of residence, others considered that demographic issues, such as the area’s diversity amongst their cities and suburbs’ most attractive features. Indeed, those who discussed these issues in the Southeast Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura and Dandenong groups strongly praised their areas’ diversity. Moreover, one of the groups from the Mornington Peninsula felt that their local population was fairly homogeneous and considered the absence of cultural diversity to be one of their area’s main shortcomings. That there is strong support for diversity—particularly ethnic diversity—is important as participants from both the South East Metro and Mildura groups acknowledged that the continued shortage of professionals, especially doctors, suggests that Australia must continue to rely upon immigration as a way to replenish its population and labour force, particularly those with skills that are in high demand, but for which there are few qualified Australians to serve the community.

Throughout many of the metropolitan based groups there was a distinct lament over what the participants perceived as a loss of community. It has already been established that many participants raised their concerns over the impact of construction and development upon their areas’ physical environment. However, they also suggested that such practices, which led to high rates of residency turnovers, made it impossible to maintain strong links with their neighbours. They also felt that contemporary lifestyles made it very difficult to sustain positive and frequent interaction within their areas of residence. Indeed, participants in South East Metro, Inner North, Altona and Mornington Peninsula all expressed disappointment with the fact that they felt that communities (for various reasons pertaining to the issues raised previously, as well as in those discussed in the sections on social harmony) were breaking down, and they were hoping that there could be ways to re-establish a sense of community solidarity and neighbourliness. Some participants in the South East Metro, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that maintaining and strengthening community were not only important for keeping up a locale’s morale, but also contributed to preventing crime and contributing to individual and broader human and national security.

Social harmony

Participants in most focus groups considered that they lived within either a reasonably socially harmonious neighbourhood, or felt that comparatively Victoria and Australia did not face significant threats that would divide either the state or the country. Many of the comments relating to the positive and negative features of social harmony are also relevant to multiculturalism, Australian identity and security, and they are addressed in those sections of this report. However, there are two factors which may be important to indicate at this stage as partially underpinning participants’ positive perceptions about the degree of social harmony throughout their neighbourhoods, state and the country. One of the Inner North groups raised the point that social harmony is strong in the country because Australia does not (officially) elevate the importance of one ethnic or religious community’s experiences over those of any other. Second, participants in the South East Metro, both Inner North Groups, Altona, Mildura and Dandenong groups all pointed to previous migrant communities’ experiences of arriving in Australia, becoming acclimated to the country and its customs, overcoming hardship, and then becoming part of the mainstream as evidence that Australia, its inhabitants and those new to the country make mutual efforts to ensure and uphold social harmony and that this process takes time. Hence, they were very optimistic about levels of current social harmony and the prospects for it to continue in the future.

Although most groups felt that they lived in relatively socially harmonious conditions they also indicated that there were certain issues or behaviours that could put social harmony in jeopardy. Their comments drew attention to the fact that various stakeholders including newly arrived groups, the Government and current Australian citizens have to take responsibility for establishing and upholding social harmony.
Migrant groups’ behaviours

In general, where participants identified potential threats to Australia’s social harmony emanating from newly arrived groups they were most likely to draw attention to what they considered to be shortcomings in their behaviour and attitudes. In three focus groups there were some participants who voiced opinions that Victorians and Australians needed to be wary of the newly arrived groups. For instance, participants in one of the Mildura groups suggested that “non-Christians” were creating problems within the state and Australia. Additionally, some participants in one of the South East Metro and Inner North focus groups feared that the new groups might “take over” the country if they were not properly kept in check or dissuaded from their current behaviours. Nevertheless, such viewpoints were clearly in the minority.

Participants were mainly concerned that new immigrants integrated into and adopted mainstream Australian behaviours. They felt that in not interacting more readily with other Australians, these groups were threatening to fracture Australian social harmony. For instance, some participants in both of the South East Metro groups and the Morwell group generally felt that immigrants were not integrating properly. More specifically, some participants in the South East Metro and Inner North groups felt that migrants neither properly demonstrated respect for Australian culture, nor properly obeyed Australian rules and customs. However, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura, Shepparton, Dandenong and Morwell groups felt that what they considered to be immigrants wilfully avoiding learning English and/or the Government not forcing or encouraging immigrants to gain a proper capacity to use the language to be the biggest threats to Australian social harmony.

Finally, participants in the Inner North, Dandenong, and Morwell focus groups expressed their concern that “old world hatreds” that some migrants brought with them to Australia were major factors that could threaten the country’s social harmony. Additionally, some of the Dandenong participants felt that it was imperative that state and Commonwealth Governments be aware of these antagonisms before they attempt to resettle populations in various parts of the state. In particular, they expressed a concern that the government should not attempt to locate new migrants from groups that had been antagonistic towards each other where they lived before they came to Australia, within the same Victorian suburbs.

Some participants felt that the Government harboured responsibilities for the status of social harmony in different ways. A few participants in the South East Metro and Altona groups argued that what they considered to be the Howard Government’s divisive policies and rhetoric were primary causes of actual and potential breakdowns to Australia’s (and Victoria’s) social harmony. However, like those participants who suggested that immigrants are a source of fear, the respondents who accused the Howard Government of enhancing antagonisms between communities were among the minority of this study’s participants.

Responsibility of host country to newcomers

Although there were some participants who felt that the Government was responsible for upholding social harmony by setting positive examples through
policies and discourse, most participants felt that Australia as a host country had to provide recently arrived migrants with some services in order to assist them with settlement. The responses included minimalist positions which suggested that it is entirely up to the migrants themselves to find ways to adjust (held by a minority of participants from focus groups in the Inner North, Altona, Mildura and Dandenong), and that the host society does not need to provide any services to newcomers. At the other pole, a minority of participants in an Inner North Group, Mildura and Morwell felt that it was up to the host country and the areas’ residents where the newcomers were arriving to increase their knowledge of the migrants’ cultures, religious and other circumstances in order to assist them in settling in their new environs. Some participants in an Inner North focus group and one of the Dandenong sessions suggested generally that they agreed with the principle that the Government and host society should make the immigrants feel welcome. More specifically, much of the discussion on these issues, however, revolved around employment seeking, social security, and education.

In terms of the former, some of the participants from the South East Metro, Dandenong and Morwell sessions felt that the host society should attempt to help migrants secure employment and pursue a “fair go”. However, one Dandenong participant implied that the “fair go” was a mutual relationship and that the Government while rightly providing assistance to newly arriving communities, should also ensure that young people do not become overly dependent on welfare after they arrived in the country. At the other end of the spectrum, one of the participants from the South East Metro focus groups suggested that the Government should provide the means to build a “scaffold for success” through various assistance programs to newly arrived migrants. However, some participants from Italian, Greek and Maltese backgrounds were very assertive that there should be limits to the amount of assistance that the Government provided to newly arrived immigrants. They felt that the earlier waves of migrants to which they or their families belonged, did not receive excessive “handouts”, and had to work hard to establish themselves, their families and communities economically, socially and culturally within Australia. Hence, they felt that the bulk of assistance should go towards helping migrants find jobs and housing. Some participants in the South East Metro, Mildura, Shepparton and Dandenong sessions articulated such opinions very forcefully. One of the Dandenong participants was quite assertive that the Government should not be paying the newly arrived immigrants’ rents. There were some participants in the Inner North and Altona focus groups who presented what could be a middle way in which the Government would vary the amount of its financial contribution, and scope of service provision towards newly arrived communities based on the circumstances in which they came to and settled in Australia. Hence, they implied that there should be more resources and assistance available to refugees who fled conflicts or severe natural disasters and did not possess the ability to speak English, than those allocated to migrants who chose to settle in Australia to improve their economic status, or for family relocation purposes.

Some participants in various groups suggested the Government should provide education for newly arrived immigrants (or soon to be migrants) within Australia and abroad. Participants in the South East Metro, Mildura and Morwell sessions concurred that it was most important for the Government to ensure that it provided immigrants with sufficient resources and classes in order for them to learn enough English for them to function on a daily basis, interact with other Australians and contribute to the workforce. Participants in the South East Metro groups emphasized the importance of encouraging children from the migrant communities to enter into schools as quickly as possible after they arrived in the country. Finally, there were those who felt that acclimating migrants with Australia and its culture after they had arrived in the country was too late. Consequently, some participants in the South East Metro and Dandenong groups suggested that the Government initiate programs on awareness of Australia in the potential emigrants’ home countries before they departed for Australia.

Proposal for future consideration:
State and Commonwealth Governments and civic organizations should increase assistance for English language instruction available to immigrants and refugees who are about to enter into Australia and Victoria, and those who have recently arrived in the state. Indeed, participants in most of the focus groups suggested that they felt it was necessary for: (a) new immigrants to learn English and (b) the host country to provide resources for language instruction to assist newcomers to the country and Victoria. Therefore, reviewing the available resources may be helpful to meet this demand adequately.
Australianness and Australian values

In general, the participants’ categorized Australianness as: diverse and dynamic. Two statements amply sum up these opinions. One participant from one of the South East Metro sessions argued that it was difficult to identify central characteristics of Australianness because “... there are many different definitions.” One of the Dandenong participants suggested that, “It’s just a work in progress I think.”

Several respondents from the Inner North and South East Metro groups noted that they were proud to be Australians, and others felt that being Australian was a privilege. For instance, those in Altona and the Mornington Peninsula stressed this, suggesting that it was important to recognise, “what a great country we’ve got.” Discussion in one of the Dandenong groups brought out that living in “Australia is luxury”. Two participants from the same sessions noted that Italian and Greek communities had felt grateful to be in Australia and appreciated “what Australia’s done for them.”

Australian identity

The question of what constitutes Australian identity generated many mixed responses. Some respondents in Shepparton, the Mornington Peninsula and Morwell expressed that it was very difficult to define Australian identity. There were very few who had narrow and exclusive definitions of what would constitute Australian identity. A single participant from one of the Mornington Peninsula groups suggested that a person had to be born in Australia to qualify as Australian. Moreover, there were only single participants in a Mornington Peninsula and a South East Metro group who felt that Australian was equated with Anglo-Celtic identity. Several participants in one of the South East Metro sessions took deep umbrage with similar suggestions. Some respondents in one of the Altona and Mornington Peninsula groups equated the “fair dinkum Aussie” as “someone from the country...with the accent”. However, they recognised that this view was changing as a result of increasing diversity. Two respondents viewed this as a positive change (Altona and Mornington Peninsula), while another two from Altona lamented the decline of this “real Australian”. Many respondents from both metropolitan and regional areas defined an Australian as someone who lives in Australia. This is evident from some of the discussions raised in the South East Metro, Mildura, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell and Shepparton groups. There were also some in one of the South East Metro groups who maintained that Aboriginal identity constituted the only authentic Australian identity.

Many respondents, however, maintained that Australian identity comprised very diverse characteristics. They opposed defining Australianness within narrow parameters, and were critical of those who restricted which ethnic and religious experiences contributed to it. Many participants from both metropolitan and regional areas equated Australian identity with a positive perception of multiculturalism. Such support was found amongst a significant amount of participants from both of the Mornington, South East Metro, Altona, Dandenong and one of the Shepparton groups.

Moreover, there was significant support for the notion that Australian identity was dynamic and developing. Many participants attributed changes in Australian identity to increasing cultural diversity. In this sense multiculturalism again was viewed positively by many respondents in Altona, Shepparton, the Mornington Peninsula, Inner North, and Morwell groups.

Participants in one of the Mildura groups raised the issue that Australian identity was changing because it was looking more to the US than the UK as a model of development during the past 30 years — the former being more positively associated with cultural diversity than the latter. When asked whether what it meant to be Australian had changed in the last 20-50 years several participants from the Inner North and Morwell groups raised comparisons with how they had been treated as Catholic and European immigrants in the past and how Australian society was now much more accepting. There was some debate within one of the Mornington Peninsula sessions that prejudice had shifted to more recent arrivals. However as documented elsewhere, they believed that with time these communities would also be perceived as far less threatening. Nevertheless, there were some participants from Altona who suggested that increasing migration threatened Australian identity, and that increased diversity could raise the risk of violence and conflict. Similarly, some Mildura participants felt that what it meant to be Australian had changed since the 9/11 attacks because heightened concerns about security restricted
freedom of movement and impacted upon who could come to Australia.

Very few participants argued that citizenship (including becoming naturalized) constituted a major component of Australianness. Indeed, only four participants, one from each of the Mornington Peninsula sessions, and another each from one of the South East Metro and Mildura groups held these opinions. Some participants from the Mornington Peninsula and Dandenong sessions also spoke positively of Australia granting permission for citizens to hold dual nationality. There was some criticism in one of the Shepparton groups about immigrants who chose “not to really become Australian”. However, a participant in one of the Altona sessions mentioned that although her father had moved to Australia from Ireland over 50 years ago, he would not become Australian because the Queen is still the Head of State.

While the participants generally did not consider Australianness to be confined to specific national or other characteristics, there was some consensus within the groups that it was associated with specific forms of behaviour. While specific reference to assimilation was limited (one of the Dandenong groups), the need to accept or adapt to the Australian “way of life” (South East Metro), particularly “the rules and regulations” (Mornington Peninsula), was emphasised by many respondents as an essential part of being Australian in the Mornington Peninsula, Dandenong, Mildura, South East Metro, and Altona groups. Also, as stated elsewhere in this report, participants felt that it was imperative for new migrants to learn the language and to integrate and participate in Australian society.

**Australian values and characteristics**

Participants in many groups believed that having some form of Australian values should be prioritzed. Several participants described Australian Values as “critically important” (Inner North), “very important” (Inner North, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, and South East Metro) or “pretty important” (Morwell).

A minority of participants did not share these views. Some did not feel that they were important at all (Altona). A handful of participants from the Altona and Mildura focus groups felt that Australian values had lost their importance because they felt that the Howard Government had politicized the Values Debate. Additionally, participants in Mildura felt that there were no distinctions between Australian values and those that European countries or the UK espoused, and went so far as to contend that Australian values are actually universal values. Within the Mildura sessions there was also a call to introduce more indigenous perspectives into the debate.

There was some consensus about what the participants felt that Australians valued. These included for instance, the “fair go”, which was the most frequently mentioned of Australian values and characteristics. Altona, Dandenong, Inner North, Mildura, Morwell, and Mornington Peninsula group participants all highlighted its importance as an Australian value. In one of the Altona groups, the “fair go” was linked with multiculturalism and suspending prejudice. Participants in Shepparton and the South East Metro sessions argued that “mateship” was an important Australian value. For instance, it was associated with the idea of helping people out (Shepparton, South East Metro), caring and looking out for others (South East Metro). Participants in Altona and the South East Metro groups identified helping people out in times of need as a value independent of mateship. Many respondents listed being “easy-going” (Altona), “friendly” (Altona), “laid-back” (Inner North, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, Shepparton, South East Metro) and “open” (South East Metro, Inner North) as Australian values and characteristics. Several participants in the Morwell and South East Metro sessions mentioned a good sense of humour as an Australian value. Similarly, with “fair go” and “mateship” these qualities were often equated with a spirit of helping one another and of acceptance of diversity.

There were other qualities somewhat associated with the “fair go”, and “mateship” which some participants also considered as Australian values. Several participants included “freedom”, particularly the freedom that comes with democracy, including freedom of speech (Inner North, Mildura, Shepparton), and freedom of lifestyle (South East Metro). However, one of the Mildura group’s participants suggested that “sometimes too much freedom, too much right, creates a problem”, that “you take too much for granted” and that with freedom comes responsibility. Some participants in the Mornington Peninsula and South East Metro suggested that honesty and integrity were Australian values, and some in Altona, Shepparton, Morwell and the South East Metro sessions underlined the importance of hard work. Several
respondents in Dandenong and Morwell associated home ownership and the work ethic with the “fair go”, and Australianness.

Indeed, many participants stressed the means of how people treated one another and broader society as important Australian values. This included respect (Dandenong, Mildura, Inner North, South East Metro). Participants in one of the Dandenong groups emphasized that respect was demonstrated in regard to the law, “our culture”, and property. Some participants stressed that Australian values encompassed commitments to families and the importance of families (Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell). Australians were described as “very strong” (Shepparton) and also the quality of being “a good person, and to do what’s right by yourself and by others; not to set out to hurt others” was mentioned as an Australian value (Mornington Peninsula). In addition, participants in Dandenong and Mildura spoke specifically of the responsibility that parents had to pass values on to their children and those in Shepparton believed it was important for parents to make sure that they strove hard to improve their children’s lives. In one of the Altona sessions, participants mentioned that equal treatment of women constituted an important Australian value. However it was qualified that this was not a particularly Australian quality but rather something towards which everyone should aspire. Participants in the Dandenong and South East Metro groups highlighted non-violence and feelings of safety as Australian qualities. Some participants from the Mornington Peninsula groups stressed that it was important for Australians to demonstrate concern for the environment.

Other respondents nominated leisure issues or cultural past-times as comprising part of Australia’s value system. Several participants mentioned “great lifestyle”, (Inner North) factors such as climate, (Inner North, Morwell), food and wine (Inner North), including BBGs (Inner North, Dandenong) and vegemite (Inner North) as quintessentially Australian. Additionally, several participants from the Inner North and Altona groups mentioned sport, especially Australian Rules Football. Participants from both these areas noted that this code served as a means to unite Australians.

Proposals for future consideration

Emphasize the diverse and dynamic nature of Australian identity. Many participants emphasized that they felt that Australian identity was derived from many different heritages, and hence inherently linked to multiculturalism. They also felt that one of the strengths of Australian society was that it did not elevate the importance of any single ethnic experience at the expense of others. A minority of participants also felt that the previous Commonwealth Government, some media representatives, and other commentators may have unnecessarily increased social tensions by attempting to develop a narrow set of criteria to define and authenticate Australian national identity.

Emphasize that Australian identity is based on behaviour, not heritage. Most participants expressed their feelings that respect for the law, respect for others and developing a working knowledge of English were key factors in becoming part of Australian society and contributing to it positively.

While most participants raised what they considered to be very positive qualities of Australianness and Australian values there were some who raised some problematic aspects of the supposed national character. Some Mildura participants mentioned that Australia harboured prejudices. Participants in the South East Metro, Mildura and Mornington Peninsula groups addressed the negative role that alcohol can play in Australian life. Nevertheless, such opinions were not prevalent throughout the study.

Perceptions of multiculturalism

Understanding and defining multiculturalism

Participants generally felt that multiculturalism was equated with how they viewed Australian society, a way of living together, sharing and valuing cultural diversity, mutual respect, living in accordance with Australian law and assimilating and integrating into Australian culture.

Several participants from the Dandenong sessions equated multiculturalism with Australian society. More specifically, in one of the Mildura groups participants argued that multiculturalism helped to define an Australian national identity that made it distinct from Great Britain. Indeed, some participants from the South East Metro, Inner North and Mildura
sessions even went so far as to argue that a novel Australian national identity would develop further, as there might be a possibility that in time multiculturalism could disappear as all cultures would blend into one. Some participants in the South East Metro, Inner North and Dandenong focus groups cited living together with different cultures as a definition of multiculturalism. Some participants in the Morwell groups considered it as “different cultures sharing” their way of life, their food, and their arts. Several participants from Morwell, Altona, the Inner North and Mildura considered multiculturalism to be a means of two-way integration, especially learning from different cultures, as opposed to a need for migrants to assimilate. Discussion in one of the Mildura sessions considered it to be the equal rights and mutual respect of all cultures. However, some of the Altona discussions noted that it was proper to respect migrants’ cultures, but that it was necessary for them to adopt Australian laws, even over religious beliefs. Some in the South East Metro sessions contended that multiculturalism offered a space where different cultures were encouraged to preserve their traditions, but in exchange migrants had to leave their historic tensions behind them. Several participants from the Dandenong and Mornington Peninsula groups equated multiculturalism with assimilation into the diverse Australian community. However, the manner in which participants used the term assimilation seemed to indicate a two-way integration approach where new Australians were asked to be part of a multi-ethnic and multi-faith Australian community. A lack of integration was associated with communities that refused to partake in multicultural Australian life and remained segregated in their own cultural groups.

Benefits of multiculturalism

Respondents overwhelmingly stated that multiculturalism had improved Australia and listed many positive ways multiculturalism had enhanced Australian lifestyles and contributed to social harmony. They suggested that multiculturalism has strengthened the country, made Australians value cultural diversity, has promoted tolerance of diversity within the country, and has encouraged Australians to appreciate and strive for egalitarianism.

The participants’ consensus was that learning from different traditions constituted multiculturalism’s greatest benefit to Australia. They claimed it broadened Australians’ horizons and enriched the quality of Australian life. Similarly, some participants from the South East Metro and Mildura groups felt that the bilingualism that developed from multiculturalism is an asset to Australian society.

Many participants spoke of valuing cultural diversity and the harmonious nature of Australian society that developed from multiculturalism (South East Metro, Morwell, Mornington Peninsula, Inner North, Altona, Mildura). Some participants from each of the Mornington Peninsula groups felt that this was because multiculturalism helped to instil tolerance and acceptance within Australians. This helped to establish a sense of egalitarianism within Australian society because, as some participants from the Inner North groups suggested, no single culture dominates.

Some participants appreciated other aspects of multiculturalism. Most participants noted the fact that multiculturalism has enhanced the nation’s palate. Many participants in all regions commented upon food’s positive contribution to Australian lifestyles and culture through multiculturalism. However, some saw food as having more than gastronomic benefits for the country. Some participants in Altona and Dandenong viewed sharing meals with members of different cultures as a means of building trust and social harmony, and as a means of beginning to know each other. Participants in Mildura, Altona, Morwell, Shepparton, and the South East Metro regions suggested that multiculturalism helped to bring dynamism to Australian culture by expanding cultural producers’ and publics’ contact, and exposure with and inspiration from a variety of artistic media such as music, dance and cultural festivals. Some participants from Altona and the Mornington Peninsula felt that Australians who were born here could learn much from observing some immigrant families’ close bonds, including strong relations with members of their extended families. Some in Altona, Morwell and the South East Metro sessions felt that multiculturalism helped to increase Australia’s sporting culture, and they mentioned soccer specifically. Finally, some participants in the South East Metro session contended that multiculturalism played a significant role in filling gaps in the labour market by encouraging workers to migrate to Australia.

Concerns with multiculturalism

Although participants had many positive things to say about multiculturalism, they were also very candid in sharing what they perceived to be potentially negative consequences of multicultural policies. They felt that multiculturalism might bring
with it new groups resisting integration or failing to integrate; not learning English; differences potentially generating tensions; and some religious beliefs and practices that could cause disruptions to Australia’s social fabric. Participants in both Mornington Peninsula groups, and those in Morwell and Shepparton made mention of their concern that multiculturalism might not in all cases provide enough incentives for new groups to integrate and participate in Australian life. Several respondents noted that some immigrant communities did not feel the need to learn English and that this was a problem (South East Metro, Shepparton). While it was acknowledged that it was difficult to learn a new language and that this problem would improve with subsequent generations (South East Metro), one respondent stressed the need to learn English to overcome this issue (Shepparton). Some participants felt that as different groups would be sharing the same social spaces this might naturally cause social tensions (Mornington Peninsula). However, another identified “fear of difference” as a problem (Shepparton). Yet, the same respondent stressed that the likelihood of these differences erupting into any genuine threat was minimal and that the threat from drug or alcohol related violence was actually much more of an issue. Some participants in the Mornington Peninsula and Morwell groups cited intolerance of differences as problematic, which was linked to ignorance. Several respondents from Altona and Dandenong expressed concerns about religion as a cause of conflict, while simultaneously affirming the need to respect religious diversity. However, their main concerns were that “old world” tensions might be transplanted to Australia.

**Multiculturalism’s future**

Despite the fact that many participants listed what they considered to be actual or perceived shortcomings in multiculturalism, they were also somewhat sympathetic to the plight of people who were experiencing problems settling in the country. Moreover, they expressed optimism, based on previous groups’ experiences that eventually groups currently struggling to fit in, or perceived as marginalized would become part of mainstream. Some participants in Altona, the Mornington Peninsula and the South East Metro groups acknowledged that integration takes time. The newly arrived migrants need to acclimatise and the host society has to learn to be more accepting of differences. Several participants from the South East Metro sessions spoke compassionately about the difficulties new immigrants faced in adapting to a new country and that for some it was simply too difficult. Many respondents noted that while some historic tensions were maintained by first generation Australians, second generation Australians, children of immigrants growing up in a multicultural society were far less likely to harbour these grievances (Inner North, Dandenong, Mildura, Altona). In particular, they argued that attending multicultural schools (Altona, Dandenong) and playing sport (Inner North) would assist the young migrants or the children of migrants enter into, and become acclimated with Australian society with fewer difficulties. Some Morwell participants associated multiculturalism with globalization, such as global communications systems and increased migration and felt that this would have positive impacts upon Australian society. In fact, several participants in the South East Metro, Altona and Inner North groups spoke of the need for labour migration, and that more immigration would benefit Australia. Indeed, discussion in one of the Inner North sessions suggested that the potential benefits that labour migration could bring to the country may require a loosening of current immigration laws.

Yet not all participants viewed multiculturalism’s future as positively. Participants in Shepparton and Altona felt that multiculturalism and newly arrived communities could increase gang violence. In Mildura, there was some discussion that as a result of limited resources due to pressures of global warming and population growth, that perhaps Australia could not manage a larger population and that with time tensions could arise over resources. In one discussion, fears of the “original culture” being overtaken by another culture were raised while drawing parallels to Muslim communities in Holland. Despite the acknowledgment of the tensions between the majority Dutch and the Netherlands’ Muslim communities, no participants in any of the focus groups suggested that multicultural policies facilitated environments that fostered terrorism or extremism. Only a single Dandenong focus group raised the link between terrorism and multiculturalism, and this elicited a fairly neutral statement: “I don’t believe that multiculturalism will bring us terrorism or cut it back.”
Proposal for future consideration:

Maintain a strong commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. Many participants have indicated that they feel that they live in a socially harmonious state and country, and have expressed positive opinions towards the way in which Australia values cultural and religious diversity. They considered these to be among Australia’s key strengths as a nation. While it is true that most participants did not see a direct connection between multiculturalism and security whether threatening or enhancing it, some have indicated that Australia and Victoria’s multicultural policies play a strong role in reducing tensions that currently plague some European societies. Multiculturalism’s role in daily life and within public affairs could be an important asset in maintaining social harmony within Victoria and Australia.

Security

The project’s participants indicated that they were concerned with a myriad of security issues which ranged from those matters that affected them immediately within their own neighbourhoods to those for which they expressed concern that took place elsewhere in Australia and overseas. These included law and order; border security; terrorism; anti-terrorism legislation and the powers of counter-terrorism agencies, and specific groups such as Muslims, Sudanese and young people. Further discussion on these three groups is addressed elsewhere in this report.

The proceeding discussion generally suggests that participants believed that Australia is inherently less safe than it was 10 years ago. Nevertheless, while there appears to be consensus on Australia not being as safe overall, especially in relation to foreign policy matters, most participants do not feel that Victoria is especially threatened, particularly by overseas events, such as the spread of global terrorism. Overall, most of the participants expressed most concern over domestic issues such as law and order. Where participants voiced their worries with international matters they tended to emphasize border control and immigration issues more emphatically than they did terrorist-related concerns.

Is Australia safer or less safe than a decade ago?

Participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Mildura, Shepparton and Dandenong sessions were virtually unanimous in their opinions that Australia is much less safe than it was during the 1990s. However, there was much less consensus on whether Victoria was less safe, and in particular, whether participants felt that Victoria was specifically threatened by a terrorist attack.

A handful of participants felt that Australia was somewhat safer and that this was partially attributable to some of the previous Commonwealth Government’s initiatives and other developments. Individual participants in Shepparton, the Mornington Peninsula, and Inner North groups respectively indicated that Australia was safer because of the previous Coalition Government’s actions banning semi-automatic assault rifles after Martin Bryant’s massacre at Port Arthur in 1996, the Howard Government’s raft of anti-terrorism legislation and other security measures, and its public relations campaign which made Australians more informed and conscious about security and terrorism. One participant from an Inner North group also felt that Australia was safer because women were more likely to report incidences of domestic violence to law enforcement officials.

Terrorism

Participants viewed the degree of threats, especially terrorist attacks, to Australia and Victoria in absolute and relative terms. In regards to the former example, some participants in the Morwell group felt that historically Australia has always been threatened. Some participants in the South East Metro, Mornington Peninsula and Morwell groups argued that threats to Australia came from various sources: the impact of globalization, Australia’s role in international affairs, its commitment to combating terrorism at home and abroad, its participation in overseas conflicts, including those in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the global spread of terrorist groups, including some alleged or convicted members of cells and individuals within the country. In fact, one participant from one of the South East Metro groups felt that a terrorist attack within Australia was imminent, suggesting that it was not a question of “if, but when” an attack would occur. However, only within the Morwell group was there a consensus that a terrorist attack within Victoria was inevitable. Participants in that group argued that as the power
stations in the La Trobe Valley constituted part of Victoria and Australia’s critical infrastructure, their area would be a potential target for terrorists. One of the Altona groups suggested that although they felt generally confident that there was a slight chance that terrorists would conduct attacks within Victoria, they expressed some concern about the possibility that such actions could occur where there were large concentrations of people, such as major sporting events.

Some participants suggested that Australia and Victoria were unlikely to be targets for terrorist attacks. Participants from the Inner North and Morwell groups suggested that neither terrorism nor any other contemporary threat compared to the levels of destruction Australia could have faced during the Cold War. Yet, they did not discount the potential damage and fear that terrorist attacks could have within the Australian mainland and especially in Victoria. Participants in Mildura expressed the opinion that the odds that a particular individual would be the victim of terrorist violence were extremely low. Therefore, they argued that terrorism attracted a disproportionate amount of attention in comparison, to say, road fatalities. Some participants from Dandenong and the Mornington Peninsula believed that terrorists would be far more interested in attacking infrastructure or population points in other countries. Hence, they suggested that Australia was not as strategically important or attractive for terrorists as for instance, the US, UK or France. Participants from some of the South East Metro, Mildura and Morwell groups expressed their opinions that what they perceived to be lower inter-cultural and intergroup tensions in Australia and Victoria compared to some European countries—especially in relation to Muslim minorities—reduced the potential for social and cultural antagonisms to emerge that could fuel hatred and eventually lead to terrorist attacks. Some of the participants in the South East Metro and Shepparton groups stated explicitly that they did not consider Victoria to be threatened. However, some of the South East Metro participants felt that while Victoria may not be as highly ranked for terrorist attacks as other Australian major cities and territories such as Sydney or the ACT, it would be more attractive and strategically important to terrorists than for instance, Tasmania.

Law and order

In many groups participants responded with evidence or concerns about law and order issues when they were asked whether they felt that Australia was safer or less safe now than it was a decade ago. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Inner North and Altona sessions raised issues of public safety and crime prevention when they responded to this question. Participants in the South East Metro, Altona, Dandenong, Shepparton and Morwell focus groups expressed their deep concern that drug and alcohol abuse were among the primary threats to their local security. Participants in the Dandenong, Mildura, the Mornington Peninsula and Altona sessions felt that police needed to be assisted in dealing with crime to address the threats to local communities. Altona and Mildura focus group participants felt that the police did not have sufficient powers with which to deal with many criminal acts. In fact, in Dandenong some participants argued that there were some individuals within newly arrived migrant groups who did not demonstrate sufficient respect towards the police. However, within the same discussion, some participants suggested that perhaps this was a remnant of their experiences from their home countries: rather than assisting the population and upholding laws, police operated as an oppressive force and considered themselves above the law.9

In Dandenong some participants felt that in order to uphold law and order effectively, and execute their duties properly, police ranks needed to be increased. Some participants in Dandenong and the Mornington Peninsula groups suggested that citizen groups be formed to assist law enforcement officials. Participants in the Dandenong groups recommended forming an organization like the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to assist police.

Border security

Many participants in several groups expressed a deep concern with the prospect that Australia and Australians’ security was threatened by people who could penetrate Australia's borders illegally. Consequently, participants from the South East Metro, Mildura, Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula and Morwell groups all greatly underlined the importance of strengthening Australia’s border protection measures. They felt that the border was too big and as such the Commonwealth Government needed to devote more attention to finding ways to ensure that illegal immigrants did not arrive in Australia. They also noted that Australia was far too lenient with those it permitted to enter Australia legally, and that Australian consular and customs officials should improve the manner in which they screen potential entrants into the country.

In order to strengthen Australia’s border protection some participants in one of the Mildura groups...
advocated that Australian officials take measures in other countries to pre-empt individuals from arriving in the country. These included applying pressure to source countries of illegal immigration to crack down on human trafficking, and investing in the countries to raise their levels of economic performance which could discourage potential migrants from embarking for Australia.

Participants in Mildura and Morwell suggested that diseases could enter the country from overseas. These groups’ participants maintained that infectious diseases constituted a significant threat that Australian officials needed to consider within the context of border protection.

**Anti-terrorism legislation and the powers of counter-terrorist agencies**

The participants’ responses to questions pertaining to anti-terrorism legislation and counter-terrorism suggest that they are somewhat unfamiliar with specific breakdowns of State, Federal Police and intelligence services’ responsibilities in this area. Many participants exhibited scepticism towards anti-terrorism legislation. However, participants did not suggest that the laws needed to be strengthened or that police require additional powers. At the same time, participants in Dandenong, the Mornington Peninsula and Altona indicated that they were unsure whether the legislation was strong enough. They also could not determine whether the Australian Federal Police, ASIO or Victoria Police were responsible for conducting arrests related to terrorism, or had enough powers to confront actual or potential terrorist attacks. Conversely, many participants from the South East Metro and Mildura sessions felt that the legislation was too severe. Participants in the Morwell group judged them to be sufficient for preventing would-be terrorists from taking actions, or prosecuting them if they were accused of engaging in or planning them. However, some participants in the South East Metro and Shepparton groups felt that no matter how strong the legislation is or how well prepared counter-terrorist agencies may be, they cannot prevent all terrorist attacks because determined terrorists will find ways to carry out their missions. Indeed, participants in the South East Metro, Mildura, and Morwell groups all stressed that, although it is necessary to have strong and effective anti-terrorism laws, it is also imperative that there be proper oversight and transparency regarding the legislation and those who are authorized to enforce the laws. Participants in these groups raised the examples of the London Metropolitan Police shooting Jean Charles de Menezes and the mishandling of Australia’s Mohamed Haneef case to demonstrate the importance of these matters.

In respect to the Haneef case, participants in Altona, Mildura and Morwell were very concerned with what they considered to be the previous Coalition Government’s attempts to politicise the police. There were very few participants who felt that there was a need to introduce additional measures which would restrict freedoms. A participant in one of the South East Metro sessions suggested that it was necessary to restrict civil liberties to combat terrorism. One participant in one of the Mildura groups felt that courts and civil liberties undermined police efforts and that their actions should be curtailed in the interests of national security. Some participants from Mildura and the Mornington Peninsula felt that it was necessary to increase surveillance on those groups or individuals that are considered “risks” to the community in order to enhance national security.

The participants tended to believe that the new anti-terrorism laws were designed to deal with potential terrorist threats coming from the country’s Muslim communities. Indeed, this was the view that many participants from the South East Metro, Mornington Peninsula and Morwell sessions contributed to their respective focus groups. Some participants in one of the Altona groups felt the Government also enacted the new legislation with those from the Middle East, India and Pakistan in mind. A minority within the South East Metro group did not feel as if the laws targeted any specific community. Some participants from one of the Altona groups also felt that they were not sure whether or not the Government framed the legislation in respect to any religious or ethnic group. However, there were some participants who felt that if the Government drew up the legislation with a particular group in mind then it was justified because the group must be a serious threat to Australian security.

**Proposal for future consideration:**

*Increase public awareness of the distribution of counter-terrorist stakeholders’ jurisdictions and responsibilities.* Participants generally felt that the existing anti-terrorist legislation is sufficient in the current circumstances. However, they indicated that they were unaware of the distribution of enforcement duties amongst Victoria Police, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).
Perceptions of Muslims in Victoria

During the focus-groups, participants mentioned Australia and Victoria’s Muslims, in the context of discussions about what they considered good and bad about communities, social harmony, threats, multiculturalism and other themes. The frequency with which these issues were raised, and the incidence of extremely ill-informed views expressed, prompted the researchers to include the following section in this report. The purpose of this section is to inform relevant stakeholders of the levels and types of understanding (and misunderstandings) that some Victorians have regarding the state’s Muslim citizens and residents. The views expressed in this section are those expressed by some participants in the focus groups as attributed, and are not the views of the researchers.

Despite the fact that some participants made negative statements or accusations about Islam and Muslims throughout their discussion in the focus groups, there were also quite a few contributors who produced significant challenges to those viewpoints. On several occasions they demonstrated familiarity with Islam’s teachings to counter negative comments. During the discussions of terrorism and political violence, there were many participants who raised the fact that Muslims had engaged in acts of terrorism. However, not all participants immediately associated Muslims with terrorism. Some participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura and Mornington Peninsula groups made efforts to go on record that “not all Muslims are terrorists” or that “not all Muslims are violent”. Participants in some groups also noted that there were other secular and religious groups, and even some individuals who engaged in violence, including terrorism. In one of the Inner North groups participants talked about how an animal rights activist assassinated Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, that secular groups like the Tamil Tigers and some Palestinian groups conducted suicide bombings, and that the Japanese Kamikaze also contributed to the development of modern suicide tactics. They also drew attention to the fact that some attacks on abortion clinics in the US came from a minority of Christians with religious motivations. In one of the Dandenong sessions participants noted Martin Bryant’s 1996 massacre at Port Arthur to demonstrate that “stereotypical Australians” were capable of inflicting harm on innocent people.

Other participants demonstrated their knowledge of the Islamic faith when they defended Muslims and Islam from accusations that they were inherently violent. Some participants in the South East Metro, Mildura, Shepparton, Mornington Peninsula and Morwell sessions suggested that they were aware that the Qur’an prohibits killing innocent people, and that those who were engaging in acts of violence were misinterpreting the Qur’an and perverting the religion.

At the same time, there were some participants who felt that Muslims constitute a threat to Australian national security, and they harboured some very critical opinions and concerns about Islam, Australia’s Muslims, their behaviour and their participation in Australian life. Some participants raised their objections to what they considered to be misogyny amongst Muslim men and criticized some Muslim clerics (particularly in relation to violence). Some participants in the South East Metro sessions noted their outrage with former Mufti of Australia, Sheik Taj din al-Hilali’s, disparaging comments on Western women. While there was universal condemnation of his statements, there was also an acknowledgment that many Muslims were also critical of his statements and that they too had voiced their disapproval of Hilali’s views.

Perceptions of Muslims and their participation in Australian life

Participants in several groups expressed opinions that Australian Muslims were not making positive contributions to Australian society, and that in many cases they were disrupting the country and state’s social harmony. Some participants in the South East Metro and Shepparton groups felt strongly that Muslims were keeping to themselves and not integrating properly into Australian life. Additionally, some participants from the Altona and Shepparton groups went so far as to accuse Muslims as being a negative presence in their neighbourhoods. Some participants in the Inner North, Altona, Shepparton, Dandenong and Mildura groups felt that Muslims were actively forcing their beliefs on the Australian population. In one of the Inner North groups, some participants felt that Muslims were trying to impose restrictions on religious freedoms since they arrived in the country. Some Mildura participants suggested that the Islamic Council of Victoria’s religious vilification case against the Catch the Fire Ministries constituted an example of Muslims attempting to interfere with and obstruct other belief systems proselytising in Australia. Some of the Dandenong participants lived in fear that once the Muslim population began to increase they would attempt to impose sharia in areas where they reached “a critical
mass”. Finally, some participants in the South East Metro and Altona groups were under the impression that Muslims were attempting to prevent Christmas celebrations and displays.

Gender relations
Throughout many groups, participants expressed concerns about what they considered to be the mistreatment and second class status that Islam and especially Muslim men meted out to Muslim women. Indeed some participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Altona, Mildura and Shepparton groups stated that they were very worried that Muslim women were either being abused or not treated fairly within their own communities. Some of the Shepparton groups’ participants went so far as to raise the prospect that they may be suffering spousal abuse but not reporting it to proper authorities. Some participants held extremely ill-informed views including a participant from one of the South East Metro groups, who thought that Muslims in this country practiced female genital mutilation (infibulation).

Participants in some of the groups also voiced some strong criticism towards the hijab (headscarf) niqab (facial covering), and burqa (full body covering). In the Dandenong and Shepparton focus groups, some participants believed that Muslim women were forced to wear some head (and in some instances facial) coverings. As a result, they felt very uncomfortable. Some female participants in the Inner North and Altona groups believed that Muslims were judging them unfavourably because they did not dress in accordance with Islamic guidelines. One male participant from one of the Shepparton groups noted that, because he believed Muslim women wear the hijab in order not to arouse male attention, this implied that Muslims considered him a potential rapist. He intimated that he felt very offended by such a supposition. Some participants in Altona argued that the burqa and niqab constituted security threats because they can conceal a person’s identity or in the case of the former, potentially even weapons. Discussion in one of the Mildura groups was highly critical of the burqa because they witnessed the difficulties that some Muslim women had walking when wearing them. Some participants acknowledged that Muslim men did not force Muslim women to wear the hijab, but that women chose to be covered in order to fulfil their religious obligations. Therefore, those participants maintained that a headscarf should not be viewed as something to fear.

Muslims, terrorism and violence
The project’s participants often mentioned terrorism perpetrated by groups acting in the name of Islam as a security threat. Subsequently, this has heightened tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims and has obstructed harmonious relations between members of these communities. Some participants in the South East Metro and Dandenong focus groups noted that the 9/11 attacks and subsequent acts of terrorism that adherents to Islam have claimed to have perpetrated have caused them to fear Muslims. Throughout the discussions many participants suggested that they felt that Al Qaeda or similar groups were most likely to conduct terrorist attacks against Australia. However, a few participants in the Inner North and Shepparton thought the Howard Government would stage attacks to attempt to justify clamping down on rights. To reiterate, these were isolated opinions.

When the participants were asked what factors drove such terrorism as that perpetrated by Al Qaeda and similar groups the participants gave responses that suggested Muslims were reacting to negative phenomena or that there were elements within the religion, or that were inherent within Muslims that caused them to engage in violence.

Some of the participants in the South East Metro, Inner North, Mildura, Shepparton and Dandenong groups contended that those perpetrating acts of violence in the name of Islam were reacting to decades of oppressive foreign policy that they considered marginalized Muslims. Some in the South East Metro and Mornington Peninsula groups felt that some Muslims engaged in violence because they were suffering from poor socio-economic conditions and were struggling to improve them.

However, there were other sets of responses which laid the blame on Muslims and Islam, and they implied that the religion and its adherents were not interested (or even permitted) to live peacefully with non-Muslims. Some participants in the Inner North groups suggested that Islam sanctioned violence, including terrorism against non-Muslims. Among the participants in the South East Metro, Altona, Inner North, Dandenong, and Morwell groups, there were some who suggested that various clerics incited violence among believers. Some Altona and Dandenong participants emphasized that those who perpetrated terrorist acts were brainwashed by clerics. One of the Inner North sessions produced an argument that Muslims were “besotted by death”. In Morwell, some participants felt that there was an element of fanaticism in the religion which influenced...
some Muslims to act violently. Some Dandenong participants felt that Muslims sought to impose their will over non-Muslims, and in some cases, to eradicate those who did not share their religious beliefs.

Perceptions of the Sudanese community in Victoria

In instances in which there were people who were personally acquainted with Sudanese people, like some in the Dandenong sessions, participants commented on the positive contributions that they made to their neighbourhoods and broader community. Additionally, participants in Morwell felt that the local community was very accepting of the Sudanese who moved into the area. Nevertheless, the participants indicated that they had concerns with the state’s citizens and residents from Sudan. However, it is important to reiterate an important qualification. These focus groups were initiated very shortly after a prolonged series of media attention on perceived Sudanese youth violence, the death of young Liep Gony and reports of tensions between Sudanese youths and Victoria Police around Dandenong and Noble Park. It is very possible that participants in many of the focus groups may have had these reports in mind when they were discussing Victoria’s Sudanese community in their respective sessions.

Although participants did not have as prolonged and detailed conversations about recent Sudanese immigrants and Australian citizens of Sudanese descent as they did in respect to Muslims, most references to them were negative and in some instances suggested that the participants considered them a threat. Some participants in the South East Metro, Inner North and Mornington Peninsula groups felt that the Sudanese groups were not integrating in their communities, and were deliberately living apart from their fellow Victorians. However, some Mornington Peninsula participants also mentioned that some of the English residents in their neighbourhoods also remained somewhat aloof. Some Altona participants associated young Sudanese males with crime and gangs, and some of the Dandenong participants suggested that they lived in fear of young Sudanese males. Others in the Dandenong sessions felt that young Sudanese males did not respect Australian culture or the Victoria Police, and they criticised such alleged behaviour.

Youth

In many instances, participants’ allegations of deviance and anti-social behaviour tended to be associated with young people. However, there were several instances in which some participants felt that youth not only constituted a risk to society, but that their social circumstances put them ‘at risk’ of having poor prospects for employment, or falling into lifestyles which would impact upon them negatively. Some participants in the South East Metro, Mildura and Shepparton groups felt young people’s behaviour, including criminal activities constituted very serious threats to public safety and social harmony. However, some participants in Shepparton and the Mornington Peninsula expressed their concern that if young people were to pursue positive life trajectories they needed more leisure outlets. Hence, they suggested that the state or local government needed to invest resources into improving facilities that cater to young people’s needs, beyond night clubs.

The status quo (or more precisely, the status quo ante)

It will be recalled that a minority of participants expressed their displeasure with the previous Commonwealth Government. In particular, they suggested that they were responsible for disrupting social harmony within Australia.

On other matters, some of the participants held some very negative views towards the Howard Government and its policies. In some instances, they expressed opinions that it might have jeopardized Australian security or pursued some courses of action for self-interested purposes as opposed to the national interest in some of its foreign policy decisions. During the discussions, participants were asked whether they felt that the Howard Government exaggerated the threat of terrorism. Opinion on this matter was divided in the Shepparton and Dandenong focus groups. Participants in the South East Metro and Mornington Peninsula groups felt that the Howard Government had exaggerated the threat of terrorism to bolster its position. Some in one of the Mornington Peninsula groups suggested that they enhanced perceived terrorist threats in order to justify security spending. However, the participants in the Morwell group emphatically believed that terrorists were likely to plan attacks against Australia and particularly their region—and that therefore, the Howard Government did not over-emphasize the possibilities of such
incidents. Finally, participants from the South East Metro, Altona, Shepparton and Mildura groups were highly critical of the Howard Government’s close relationship with the United States, and in particular participating in military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. They argued that these actions enhanced Australia’s attractiveness as a potential target for terrorists. Indeed, several discussions within the aforementioned groups revolved around the perception that the Howard Government’s relationship with the Bush Administration constituted the most significant threat to the country’s security.

The media

Many participants argued that some members of particular ethnicities and religions—and on rare occasions the Howard Government—increased social tensions through actions and public statements. However, in several groups, participants argued that the media had a significant role in contributing to problems within Australia and Victoria. Some participants in the South East Metro groups felt that the mass media were responsible for providing young people with poor role models. However, some participants in other groups contended that the media generated or perpetuated negative stereotypes, or conducted campaigns that may have fuelled antagonisms or fear between communities. For instance some participants in the Inner North and Mildura groups believed that the media greatly exaggerated terrorist threats. Some in the Inner North contended that the media generated negative stereotypes of the Sudanese. In Altona, Dandenong and Shepparton some participants argued that the media depicted Muslims negatively. Some Shepparton participants felt that the media treated Aboriginal Australians similarly.

Proposals for future consideration:

State and Police officials should work very closely with Muslim and Sudanese communities’ representatives to help redress misinformation about these groups circulating within the broader Victorian public. Although there have been many Muslim public intellectuals who have been contributing to the media and other public forums to reduce misunderstandings between Muslim Australians and the wider Australian community, there is still a need to continue and increase these activities. The Sudanese community may not yet have the array of contributors to the media to help serve as bridges to Victoria and Australia. Moreover, in both cases, politicians, civil servants and police officers who are trusted within communities should be encouraged to make joint press statements, attend functions and emphasize, where appropriate the positive contributions that Muslim and Sudanese Victorians make to the broader Victorian and Australian communities.

Develop and/or enhance programs that will train newly arrived community leaders in managing the media and other leadership skills, similar to the ones that the Australian Multicultural Foundation coordinates for young Muslims. In recent years organizations like the Australian Multicultural Foundation have been running seminars and most recently fully developed programs to instil leadership skills, such as managing the media, for young Muslims. These programs are highly successful and could be used as a model to bring young men and women from the Sudanese, and subsequently other newly arrived migrant communities, into Australian public life.

Encourage more Muslim women to contribute to media discussions. Although this is currently being addressed within existing leadership and media training sessions, it needs to be re-emphasized. The degree to which many of the study’s participants demonstrated little knowledge about Muslim women’s lives, the significance they placed on the hijab, and their belief that it symbolises Muslim women’s oppression, suggests that there is an information gap on these issues. Muslim women are best suited to engage in these matters as: (a) they are most aware of their own circumstances, (b) they are the individuals who are most affected by such misinformation, and (c) their participation in the media discussions will help demonstrate that they are autonomous individuals who contribute much to their faith communities and the broader Victorian and Australian communities.
Proposals for future consideration continued

Media representatives may wish to review how they portray representatives of minority communities. While certainly not suggesting censorship, we think it may be proper for journalists, editors and sub-editors and others involved in media production to reflect upon how some stories and other news and cultural items frame members of minority groups, such as Victoria and Australia’s Muslim and Sudanese communities, and the impact that this can have on these communities and on social harmony more generally.

Efforts should be made to reinforce that many so-called ‘mainstream’ Victorians also share the concerns Victoria’s minorities have about the ways that the media portray Muslims, recent Sudanese immigrants and other minority ethnic and religious groups. It is plausible that this point can form a basis of moving towards mutual understanding between communities.

Efforts should also be made to reinforce that many so-called ‘mainstream’ Victorians acknowledge that the overwhelming members of minority ethnic and religious communities make positive contributions to Victorian and Australian society.

In the same way that the Victorian Government funded and continues to fund educational activities that promote understanding about Muslim communities and Islam, similar programs are now necessary regarding the diverse African communities that have recently arrived in Australia. As concerns and fears arise largely from what is new and unfamiliar, developing understanding about newly arrived communities is critical. Therefore, it may be worth exploring the possibilities of initiating a deliberative poll, similar to the 2007 Australia Deliberates conference on Muslims for the Sudanese. Although participants in some groups alleged that some Sudanese and Muslim Victorians were engaged in anti-social behaviour, those who were familiar with members of these communities defended them and acknowledged what positive contributions that they made to their communities and Victoria. Additionally, US-based Pew Research Center surveys, and the Australia Deliberates exercise on Australian Muslims indicate that when groups become more familiar with each other, prejudices, potential flashpoints and suspicions diminish, particularly in relation to the majority population’s attitudes towards minorities.

Given the critical role of education in advancing understanding between culturally and religiously diverse communities, we recommend that in consultation with communities and scholars, the study of inter-cultural and inter-religious issues be incorporated within the core curriculum of Victorian schools. While much emphasis has previously been placed on education for immigrant communities, the matters discussed in this project suggest that it may be worth pursuing whether there is a need or desire to educate host communities on those who are newly arrived into their communities, or about to arrive in their communities. Schools have been noted as already contributing to promoting harmonious multicultural societies. Hence, various stakeholders have the opportunity to increase and enhance the content in Victorian schools which they devote towards inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding. In this way, Australia and Victoria may find it helpful to consider following some of the United Kingdom’s inter-faith and inter-cultural education initiatives.

Develop strategies to increase the significance of inter-faith activities to representatives of host communities. In previous research conducted on social cohesion, representatives of migrant and minority groups stressed the importance of inter-faith activities in generating understanding between communities. However, the participants in this study did not mention this.
Mainstream Victorians consider multiculturalism to be a vibrant force within contemporary Victoria and Australia. They feel strongly that multiculturalism has generated significant contributions to the development of Australian identity. Indeed, the participants in this study voiced near unanimous views that cultural and religious diversity enriched through multicultural policies and practices help to establish what could be considered “Australianness”.

However, in relation to this research report’s primary line of inquiry, we have found that mainstream Victorians generally do not consider there to be a relationship between multiculturalism and national security. This is not to suggest that the participants did not see a value in multiculturalism enhancing social harmony which would promote greater security in local environments. The participants acknowledged that there have been social tensions in Europe in those states that are now becoming increasingly more multi-ethnic and religiously diverse than they were even 30 years ago. They also indicated that some of these tensions resulted in terrorism being conducted in these countries, including home grown terrorism perpetrated by those of immigrant backgrounds who had lived all or most of their lives in these countries. Although the participants believed that multiculturalism could not be considered either a sole reason for terrorist attacks or the magical elixir that could prevent them, many participants felt that multiculturalism, and in particular, the emphasis on the diverse nature of Australian identity, helped to generate social harmony which would promote greater security in local environments. The participants implied that Australia’s multiculturalism policies and practices have scope for improvement. In particular, they expressed concerns that they believed that Victorian and Commonwealth officials do not put enough emphasis on newly arrived immigrants learning English, and that they did not do enough to ensure that newly arrived immigrants respect Australian laws and customs. They suggested that all stakeholders could improve this situation through increasing education programs, enabling greater inter-community interaction, and encouraging the development of more familiarity between host and immigrant communities. They also felt that Australian multiculturalism, the country’s high standard of living, and opportunities for social advancement in this country, would eventually help the members of newly arrived communities settle into their environment and begin to identify strongly with, and integrate into, mainstream Australia, just as successive waves of immigrants to this country have done since the end of World War II. Therefore, they indicated that continuing and strengthening Victorian and Australian multicultural practices and legislation, but periodically reviewing them to ensure that existing provisions enable newly arrived immigrant groups to utilize these resources to expedite acclimating to their new surroundings, would help to maintain social harmony which would help to maintain secure communities.

The participants consider that Victoria and Australia face threats from internal and external sources. Overall, participants appeared most concerned with local community issues such as crime and the prospects for violence against persons. These factors, they maintained, make individuals feel very insecure. In addition, they had broader fallout effects in placing strains on the state’s social fabric which contributes to community decline. The participants overwhelmingly demonstrated strong support for law enforcement officers. They were very concerned that police were adequately staffed, resourced and empowered to carry out their duties.

For the study’s participants, external factors constituted the greatest threats to national security. Participants were particularly concerned with illegal immigration and border protection. Additionally, the participants feared that factors such as climate change could generate waves of people from overseas illegally attempting to enter into Australia. They also indicated that strong border protection was necessary to prevent Victoria and Australia from threats such as disease or trans-national organised crime.

The participants considered that Australian foreign policy, especially as conducted under the Howard Government, increased Australia and Victoria’s vulnerability. In particular, they highlighted that they
were quite concerned with the strong relationship between Australia and the US. Furthermore, they stressed that Australia’s participation in US-led military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq increased Australia’s attractiveness as a target for terrorist attacks.

In the nation’s first National Security Statement, delivered on 4 December 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd outlined the Commonwealth Government’s understanding of national security (for further detail on the Statement, see Appendix 4). Although the focus group research for this project was completed nearly one year before the Prime Minister’s Statement, its findings correspond with many of the issues that the Commonwealth prioritises as “clear and enduring” and “non-traditional” threats to Australian security. While the participants in this study expressed concerns with aspects of the foreign policy relationship between the US and Australia, they did not manifest any overt anti-American sentiments. Additionally, it remains to be seen whether the participants would still share the same concerns about the US-Australia alliance if the incoming Obama Administration has a different approach to its foreign policy than its predecessor.

Throughout this study, participants expressed some concerns with Muslim and Sudanese Australians and residents, and their integration into mainstream Australian society. However, throughout all the groups participants noted that representatives of successive immigrant communities have made significant contributions to this country. In the case of Muslims and Sudanese Australians who have recently arrived in this country, many participants recognised that they were often struggling with coming to terms with life in their new environment, and that they needed time to adjust and acclimate themselves.

Moreover, the focus group discussions also demonstrated that so-called “mainstream Victorians” hold many views in common with respondents from minority groups who have participated in previous studies of multiculturalism. These include a positive view of living in a religiously and culturally diverse Australia, support for multicultural policies and practices, a desire to live in communities where all residents are safe, and a concern that the media, politicians and others provide minority groups with fair representations in public statements. This report has identified challenges that state and community stakeholders need to acknowledge in addressing multiculturalism, national and human security. However, it has also identified areas of common ground from which dialogue between these groups can either be initiated or continued. Addressing these issues in partnership will help to ensure that Victoria remains a secure and socially harmonious environment for all citizens and residents of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

References


Department of Education (DOE) - MACLOTE and ESL (1997), Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools, Melbourne, Community Information Service.


Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria


Multicultural Victoria Act 2004 (Vic).


Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (1989) National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing our Future: sharing our future. Canberra. AGPS.


Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria


Victorian Multicultural Commission Act 1993 (Vic).


Appendix 1: Methodology and sample

The research for this project involved the collaboration between GTReC members and GPS Research, in consultation with representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, especially in relation to designing the questions. The project received Monash University ethics clearance. GPS Research conducted primary participant selection from a data base of Victorians who agreed to be contacted for research purposes. Screening of shortlisted participants was conducted to ensure a balance in demographic and ethnographic selection.

Table A1 – Distribution of focus groups by location and demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No of focus groups</th>
<th>High immigrant populations</th>
<th>Majority Anglo-Celtic/European populations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mildura</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepparton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Peninsula</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner North (Richmond, Carlton, Fitzroy)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Eastern Metro</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altona North/ Meadows</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe Valley</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GPS Research, 2008

GPS Research was responsible for recruiting the participants and conducting focus groups in which participants discussed a range of questions pertaining to their areas of residence, their perceptions and understandings of social harmony, multiculturalism, and various security topics. Table A1 includes the breakdown of the focus groups by location and demographic attributes. In total, GPS convened 15 focus groups, comprised of 10 in metropolitan areas and 5 in regional areas of Victoria, with a deliberate sample of European-descended Australians, including those of Anglo-Celtic heritage, representing a diversity of genders; ages; locations; and socio-economic backgrounds.

Seven of the focus groups were held in areas where there is an Anglo-Celtic and/or other European majority population and 8 were conducted in areas that have comparatively high immigrant populations. In accordance with Monash University ethics guidelines, participants were all over 18 years of age.

During November and December 2007, a total of 14 focus groups were conducted for participants who lived in the South-eastern Suburbs (15 November), Northern Suburbs (22 November), Altona (29 November), Mildura (5 December), Shepparton (6 December), Dandenong (12 December), and the Mornington Peninsula (13 December). The final focus group in the La Trobe Valley was convened 24 January 2008. Each group comprised up to 10 people drawn from the local community. Each group was presented with the same set of questions.

Table A2 – Focus group participants according to sex and location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altona 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altona 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dandenong 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner North 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner North 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mildura 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Pen 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Pen 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morwell</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepparton 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepparton 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S E Metro 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S E Metro 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with Monash University’s ethics guidelines, participants disclosed only that information about themselves with which they felt...
comfortable. The team derived information on the participants based on what they shared about themselves in the focus groups. In most cases, participants did not provide many personal details. However, data based on these exchanges provide some information on the participants.

Overall, 119 Victorians contributed their time and opinions to the study. There were slightly more women (65; 54.6 percent) than men (54; 45.4 percent) who participated in these groups (Table A2). Most of the groups tended to have about equal numbers of women and men. However, there were significantly more women than men contributors in the Dandenong groups, and one of the Shepparton sessions had twice the number of female to male participants. However, male respondents exceeded their female counterparts in Altona, the Inner North and Mildura.

Of the 119 participants 74 (62.2 per cent) raised their occupations during the sessions and 45 (37.8 per cent) chose not to discuss their employment (Table A3). Retirees were the single largest group that self-identified. Four participants noted that they were unemployed at the time their focus groups were conducted. However, based on the occupational information that those who chose to disclose provided, it is possible to suggest that there was often a distinct white-collar presence within the focus groups. The bulk of the contributors who spoke of their occupations mentioned they worked in various professions, management or the service sector.

### Table A3 – Participants according to occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brewing and Wine Production</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs/Self-employed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Industry/Manufacturing/Transportation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemakers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources &amp; Management</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance and Finance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity Leave</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary and Secondary Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Servants</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Retail</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers and Volunteers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary sector administration</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Hospitality</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisclosed</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A4 – Participants according to age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and older</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Disclosed</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were less forthcoming about their age and their ethnic origins. About half of the participants (60; 50.4 per cent) raised their age in the sessions (Table A4). The bulk of those were aged between 30-59 (41). Only a handful of participants disclosed they were in their 60s or older and 14 were in their twenties. Not many of the participants discussed their ethnic origins or places of birth (Table A5). For instance, there were 10 contributors of the 18 who chose to mention this information about themselves who identified as Australian, and three of those included this mixed with another ethnicity. Additionally 18 participants mentioned that they were born overseas. This included 3 participants each from Greece, Italy and the Netherlands, 2 each from Ireland, Malta and the United States, and individuals from Germany, Denmark and another undisclosed European country.

Table A5 – Participants according to ethnic heritage and places of birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic heritage</th>
<th>(n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian w/Greek Ancestry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian w/Italian Ancestry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian w/Scots-Irish Ancestry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian/English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch/Belgian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (unspecified)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French/Slovak</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German/Greek</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek/Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Places of birth</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas (unspecified)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that these data do not provide a detailed demographic overview of the 119 participants they suggest that there was a degree of diversity within the focus groups. Indeed, it may be possible to suggest that so-called “mainstream” Australia—or at least “mainstream” Victoria—is far from homogeneous.
Appendix 2: Schedule of questions

Part 1: Your Area & You

• (Per individual) Introduce yourself – what do you do for living? Do you have kids? How long have you lived in the area?

General Discussion

• What are the good/bad things about this neighbourhood?
• Why do you live here?
• Who lives here? Has there been much change in recent years? For better/worse? How?

Part 2: Social Harmony

• Do we live in a socially harmonious society in Victoria/Australia?
• What makes it like that?
• What threatens social harmony?
• How could we make it more harmonious?

Part 3: About ‘Australia’.

• What do you mean by Australian?
• What does it mean to be an Australian? Has it changed? Is it changing?
• What are “Australian Values”?
• How important are they? To you? To your community? To the country?
• What responsibilities do Australia and Australians have to new arrivals?
• What is your understanding of multiculturalism?

Part 4: About Security

• Do you feel Australia is more or less as safe as it was 10 years ago?
• What has made us more/less safe?
• What are the major threats to Australia’s security?
• What would minimise risks to security?
• Do you think our security laws are strong enough?
• Are the security laws targeted at some groups more than others?
• Do the police have sufficient powers and resources to deal with terrorist threats?
• Has the Commonwealth Government exaggerated the threat of terrorism? Is there a real threat to Victoria?
• Has the threat of terrorism changed your views on multiculturalism?
• Are new groups assimilating into Australia?
• What factors cause contemporary terrorism?
Appendix 3: Multiculturalism and Victoria: A brief overview

Organisations managing multicultural affairs

Organisations such as the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC, which developed from the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission formed in 1983) have been long established in Victoria, and have played active roles in communicating the attitudes of cultural groups to government ministries. In 2007, the organisation’s role was further legitimised when it merged with the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs (VOMA), “creating a single entity devoted to multicultural affairs in Victoria” (VMC 2007). Working in conjunction with government departments, the VMC describes itself both historically and today as “an independent statutory authority” which since its inception “has provided independent advice to the Victorian Government to inform the development of legislative and policy frameworks as well as the delivery of services” to Victoria’s culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society (VMC 2007). These objectives and functions of the VMC were also outlined in the previous Victorian Multicultural Commission Act of 1993.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (EECV) was established in 1974, to represent migrant communities in Victoria, and share their experiences with governments. Established as a voluntary community-based organisation, the EECV describes itself as a broadly based, state-wide, peak advocacy body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria (EECV 2008). According to its website:

EECV advocates and lobbies all levels of government on behalf of multicultural communities in areas like access and equity, aged care services, migration services, discrimination, community harmony, employment, education and training, health and community services, law and justice, and arts and culture (EECV 2008).

Victorian state policies

According to a document titled Valuing Cultural Diversity (VOMA 2002), the Victorian Government outlines its commitment to the improvement of the “quality of service delivery” and “ensuring that that government services cater appropriately to a culturally and linguistically diverse community” (Victoria Government 2004: 3). The following section will discuss Victorian state policies and reports relating to multiculturalism in more depth, to illustrate how successive governments have sought to achieve social cohesion, and to enable them to “cater appropriately” to Victoria’s diverse community.

Multicultural education in Victoria

According to the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) website, almost one in four students in Victorian government schools comes from a language background other than English. The Department states this to be a major reason for its commitment to the “ongoing development of an education system where all Victorian students are empowered to take advantage” of the economic, social and individual opportunities in the community (DEECD 2007). The DEECD website goes on to state:

Just as racism and prejudice cannot be permitted to hinder the progress of any individual, all of our young people are entitled to gain an insight into the richness of our multicultural society, and to develop the understandings and skills that will assist them to develop as confident citizens of the world (DEECD 2007).

The concept of multicultural education can be said to have emerged during the 1970s. The first Migrant Education Action Conference was held in Melbourne in September 1974, with 600 participants from throughout Australia. Recommendations included “improved facilities for teaching English as a second language, the development of the teaching of migrant languages and of teaching materials for such languages, extension of translating and interpreting facilities, multilingual library holdings, and the acceptance of overseas teaching qualifications” (Clyne & Markus 2004: 84).

According to a document written by the Ministry of Education in Victoria in 1986, titled Education In, and For, a Multicultural Victoria, the aim of multicultural education was claimed to be to recognise and maintain the diverse nature of the Victorian community, and ensure social cohesion (VME 1986).
The document states that education in a multicultural society,

...is based on two basic principles: it accepts that the past and present diversity is a significant influence on Australia’s development, and it demonstrates a commitment to fostering linguistic and cultural diversity within a cohesive society. A multicultural society is built on shared values, including acknowledgement of the democratic process as the means of resolving conflict, and acknowledgement of English as the major language of communication between all Australians. At the same time, such a society accepts that there are many different expressions of similar needs and values (VME 1986: 6).

The document recommends school curricula reflect this situation, ensuring that there is an awareness of the concept of multiculturalism and its significance, that the curricula are relevant to the local and broader communities (national and international), that there is emphasis on participation in society, and that teachers and education administrators eradicate stereotyped expectations of students (VME 1986: 8-9).

Such policies and recommendations are echoed in subsequent Department of Education documents, policies, and practices. The Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programmes were established for such reasons. In 1995, the Ministerial Advisory Council on LOTE and ESL was given the responsibility to advise and recommend on the implementation of a number of such projects, including the LOTE Strategy Plan, the MACLOTE Report, and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) Strategy. The Multicultural Policy for Victorian Schools document, developed by MACLOTE and ESL in 1997, states that multicultural education “is not a part of the curriculum, in the way that Mathematics or Studies of Society and Environment are” (DOE 1997: 9). Rather, it argues that multicultural education is “a holistic approach to schooling that needs to permeate all parts of the curriculum and influence all school practices” (DOE 1997: 9). The document outlines the primary target of the policy developed by MACLOTE and ESL as ensuring that all students “have multicultural perspectives delivered across all eight key learning areas (the Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, LOTE, Mathematics, Science, Study of Society and Environment, and Technology) and incorporated into all aspects of school life” (DOE 1997: 9). Today, ESL students make up approximately 15 percent of all students in metropolitan schools in Victoria (DEECD 2007).

Multiculturalism and broadcasting

Multicultural language policies also extend into media and broadcasting, and place an importance on interpreting services. Victorian state policy was also one of the first in Australia to use broadcasting and media as a tool for multicultural policy. As Clyne and Markus point out, Victoria “was in the vanguard of development of publicly funded ethnic media” (Clyne & Markus 2001: 85). The Australian Broadcasting Commission began a multilingual access radio station in Melbourne in 1975, “to be governed by an elective representative committee, operating in addition to the new Ethnic Australian Network (now the Special Broadcasting Service) but broadcasting in far more languages” (Clyne & Markus 2001: 85). Such policies were further advocated in the 1990s. In September 1994, the Kennett Government requested the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission (now the VMC) to undertake “an inquiry into the delivery of government services to ethnic communities” (Rubenstein 1999: 254). Many recommendations outlined in The Multicultural Victoria Inquiry Report were implemented, including “those that resulted in an expansion of language training and cultural awareness for state government employees and the police force,” and greater access to interpreter services (Rubenstein 1999: 254).

Multiculturalism and industrial relations

The Victorian Ethnic Affairs Advisory Council (VEAAC) made a submission to the Victorian Parliament on behalf of ethnic communities of Victoria, as early as in 1978, that urged political leaders to recognise the difficulties migrants were having in seeking employment and within their workplaces (VEAAC 1978). The submission stated that migrants in Victoria “are subject to the same economic forces as the rest of the community but they are also affected by factors which bear on all facets of migrant life and which have an adverse effect on their employment” (VEAAC 1978: 6). Upon providing some statistics relating to unemployment rates among migrant populations in Victoria, the submission stated:

The desperate plight of school leavers and recent arrivals in the country is most forcefully spelt out
by the figures, but it must be grasped by everyone considering the subject that these are not just numbers; they are people, and people unable to partake in what most of those who compile and examine the figures consider to be an essential part of life (VEAAC 1978: 11).

These concerns were further reflected in a report the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission prepared for the 1985 UNESCO conference on Information and Human Rights for Migrant Workers by (VEAC 1985). The report sought to present the levels of communication between Victorian Government Departments, and other major institutions such as employer and union organisations, with migrant workers from non-English speaking backgrounds (NES backgrounds)(VEAC 1985: p1). The report claims that upon conducting a literature search, the investigators could not find any materials on ways to communicate with migrant workers produced prior to 1970. This is argued to have been as a result of belief among Anglo-Australians that NES migrants would learn English quickly and soon become assimilated. It was only in the latter half of the 1960s when it became clear that NES migrants were not assimilating, that a new public emphasis on the recognition of the diversity of Victoria’s population emerged. As a result, literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s focused more on “the particular information needs of different groups of NES migrant workers,” including information on occupational health and safety, “on rights and entitlements concerning workers’ compensation, on requirements to receive English training and instruction on-the-job” (VEAC 1985: 5-6).

The Equal Opportunity Act also contributes to the promotion of multicultural values in industrial relations (although obviously, it is not confined to this). The Equal Opportunity Act 1984 included race, religion, and ethnicity as attributes that could be the basis of discrimination, unlike previous versions in 1977 and 1982. The current objectives of the Act are outlined as the promotion of the “recognition and acceptance of everyone’s right to equality of opportunity” (Victorian Government 1995: s.3, ss.3). Discrimination is defined as “direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of an attribute” and outlines race and religious belief or activity as attributes of which discrimination is prohibited (Victorian Government 1995: s.6). Such regulations against discrimination further contribute to the promotion of multiculturalism and social cohesion.

The promotion of racial and religious tolerance

The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act was enacted in 2001 by the Bracks Labor Government. Prior to this legislation, some surveys were conducted and incidents of racial and religious vilification were documented. One such report was Racial Vilification in Victoria, presented to the Attorney-General of Victoria in 1992. The report outlined a number of forms of religious and racial vilification, and made recommendations to the government on how cultural harmony could be improved in Victoria. It argued that all ministries and institutions relevant to the education system should have written policies and procedures on racism; that policing institutions should look at some of the major recommendations already made to avoid police racism (it claimed the police exhibited a significant amount of racism toward Indigenous people); and that the media avoid the stereotypes it uses that may contribute to racial vilification (Dollis et al. 1992). The report recommended that further monitoring of racial vilification should take place by the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee, and that the Victorian Parliament should enact additional legislation. The current Racial and Religious Tolerance Act in Victoria is evidently a progression of such recommendations.

The current Act, which has been somewhat contentious, aims to promote racial and religious tolerance by prohibiting the vilification or marginalisation of a person or persons based on such attributes. The Act places great value on the culturally diverse nature of Victoria, and argues that Victorians are generally “proud that people of these diverse ethnic, Indigenous and religious backgrounds live together harmoniously” (Victorian Government 2001: Preamble). The Preamble then goes on to state:

...some Victorians are vilified on the grounds of their race or their religious belief or activity. Vilifying conduct is contrary to democratic values because of its effect on people of diverse ethnic, Indigenous and religious backgrounds. It diminishes their dignity, sense of self-worth and belonging to the community. It also reduces their ability to contribute to, or fully participate in, all social, political, economic and cultural aspects of society as equals, thus reducing the benefit that diversity brings to the community.

The Victorian Government has consistently defended the Act however, arguing that it further contributes to
social harmony. In a media release, then-Premier Bracks stated that the Act “provides protection for all Victorians against vilification on racial or religious grounds, and gives us an agreed community standard about how we behave towards each other in a multicultural and multi-faith society” (Bracks 2006).

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) further contributes to the legislative restrictions on racial, cultural and religious discrimination and vilification. In a media release in 2005, Victorian Attorney-General Victoria Rob Hulls highlighted the Charter’s purpose, claiming it to be a “commonsense move” that would bring together a number of laws that are “scattered” across various legislation, and would in turn “strengthen and support Victoria’s democratic system” (Hulls 2005).

The Charter protects an individual’s freedom of thought, conscience, and religious belief, including “the freedom to demonstrate his or her religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching, either individually or as part of a community, in public or in private” (Victorian Government 2005: s.12, ss.14). Furthermore, the Charter states that a person must not be coerced or restricted in the manner in which they worship, or adopt a religion, “or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching” (Victorian Government 2005: s.12, ss.14). The Charter also advocates a person’s right to declare, practice, and “enjoy” their particular culture, religious, racial and linguistic background. The distinct culture of Aboriginal people must not be denied, and they have the right to enjoy their identity, maintain and use their languages, maintain their kinship ties, and maintain “their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs” (Victorian Government 2005: s.12, ss.14). A number of responsibilities are attributed to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, including the promotion of this Charter and intervention in various circumstances.
Appendix 4: National security statement

In the nation’s First National Security Statement, delivered on 4 December 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd outlined the Commonwealth Government’s current understanding of national security, which he established as:

Freedom from attack or the threat of attack; the maintenance of our territorial integrity; the maintenance of our political sovereignty, the preservation of our hard won freedoms; and the maintenance of our fundamental capacity to advance economic prosperity for all Australians (Rudd 2008: 3).

The Prime Minister identified what he considered to be “clear and enduring security interests”, which include:

- Maintaining Australia’s territorial and border integrity.
- Promoting Australia’s political sovereignty.
- Preserving Australia’s cohesive and resilient society and the long term strengths of our economy.
- Protecting Australians and Australian interests at home and abroad.
- Promoting an international environment, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, that is stable, peaceful and prosperous, together with a global rules-based order which enhances Australia’s national interests (Rudd 2008: 6-7).

In regards to terrorism, Prime Minister Rudd noted:

The Australian Government is committed to combating terrorism to protect Australians and Australian security interests, and to promote international security. Effective mitigation of terrorist attacks involves the combination of an appropriate security response with broader strategies to enhance social cohesion and resilience and lessen the appeal of radical ideology (Rudd 2008: 18).

He also claimed that, “The United States alliance remains fundamental to Australian national security interests—both globally and in the Asia-Pacific region” (Rudd 2008: 8 original emphasis). The Prime Minister also identified several “non-traditional threats” to Australian national security such as transnational crime, pandemics and diseases, climate change, demographic change, and energy security (Rudd 2008: 21, 25-27).

A copy of the full Statement may be viewed online at www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0659.cfm.

Endnotes

1 The methodology and sample for this study are contained in Appendix 1.
2 Such attitudes are also reflected in other recently conducted studies on Australian attitudes towards social cohesion (i.e., Markus and Arunachalam 2008: vii-viii, xii).
3 The Victorian Multicultural Commission is currently conducting a pilot study in Faith and Media Training delivered by Globe Communications, the UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations (Asia Pacific) and the Global Terrorism Research Centre.
4 In light of the December 2005 Cronulla riots, recent terrorist attacks and other issues that disrupted Australian social harmony, Issues Deliberation Australia, a not-for-profit think tank initiated, and The Australian newspaper funded, a two stage deliberative poll concentrating on Muslims in Australia and mainstream Australia’s perceived attitudes towards them. The first stage of the poll comprised of a nation-wide Newspoll random survey of 1,400 Australians in which they were asked a series of questions such as, “Are Muslims a threat to the Australian Way of Life?”; and whether they agreed with statements including, “Different values make a big contribution to terrorism”; “Muslim immigration is bad for national security”; and “Muslim migrants make Australia worse” (Kerbaj and Steketee 2007; Steketee 2007b). In the second stage of the poll the organization selected up to 340 respondents, including some 40 Muslims, divided into 26 groups—13 of which included Muslims—to discuss these matters face-to-face in Canberra Following the debates there was a “dramatic drop in concern about Muslims in Australia” (Steketee 2007a; Zwart 2007a; Zwart 2007b). The change is reflected in the following (table derived from Steketee 2007b):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before conference (%)</th>
<th>After conference (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are Muslims a threat to the Australian way of life?</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different values make a big contribution to terrorism.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim immigration is bad for national security.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim migrants make Australia worse</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Although terrorism is a contested term (Schmid cited in Badley 1998), it can broadly be considered to be non-state actors “using, or threatening to use violence against non-combatants in order to effect political change and achieve political goals by establishing a climate of fear” (Lentini 2003: 366; Lentini 2008b: 134-35). Since the 1970s there have been 33 terrorist incidents in Australia which have resulted in the deaths of nine individuals, and have wounded 11 (MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base 2008; Hocking 2004). Since 2002 there has been increasing evidence, or allegations of various jihadist cells and individuals espousing the desire to engage in acts of violence in the name of Islam within Australia, notably, the group of nearly two dozen men arrested in Victoria and New South Wales in Operation Pendennis in November 2005 (Lentini 2008a).

Australians have also been the victims of terrorism abroad. There were Australians killed and wounded in the 9/11 attacks in the US. There were also Australian victims in the 7 July 2005 bombings, and an Australian hostage in the October 2002 siege of the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow. Australians have suffered in several attacks in Indonesia, including Australia’s largest numbers of casualties in bombings in Bali in October 2002 and October 2005, attacks on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, and other locations.

6 In the Global Crisis Events study a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and focus groups were held in Victoria and Queensland. Half (98) of the 183 persons interviewed were from regional Victoria and Queensland. CRALD communities interviewed included African, Albanian, Arabic, American, Anglo-Australian, Chinese, Fijian, El Salvadorian, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Iraqi, Pacific Islander, Papua New Guinean, Filipino, Polish, Sri Lankan, Thai, Turkish, British and Vietnamese groups; as well as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim communities. In the Community Policing study interviews with individual representatives of different ethnic and cultural community groups (usually the elected head of a recognised organisation), a series of small focus groups (of between 5 and 15 individuals, usually organised with the assistance of the individual community leader), and a complimentary series of larger public forums involving numbers of between 16 and 90 individuals were conducted by researchers. The following cultural and national groups ended up participating in the research exercise: Afghan; Arabic; Chinese; East Timorese; Eritrean; Greek; Indian; Indonesian; Italian; Jewish; Lebanese; Moroccan; Serbian; Sikh; Sinhalese; Somali; South American; Spanish; Sudanese (South); Tamil; Turkish; Turkish Cypriot and Vietnamese.

7 See Appendix 2 for the schedule of questions which guide this part of the report’s structure.

8 As indicated in the previous part many focus groups argued that issues of drugs and alcohol constituted severe threats to social harmony as well as the perceived behaviours of specific groups. These matters are discussed in greater detail in the section on security or in sections devoted to the groups themselves.

9 Indeed, a recent report on community policing within a counter-terrorism context communicates that some of Victoria’s ethnic and religious community leaders noted that some of their co-ethnics/co-religionists have been having a hard time interacting with and assisting Victoria Police because of the negative experiences they had with police when they lived in their native lands (Pickering et al 2007: 22).

10 Participants in one of the Shepparton groups suggested that Iraqis and other Arabs also constituted problems within their communities.